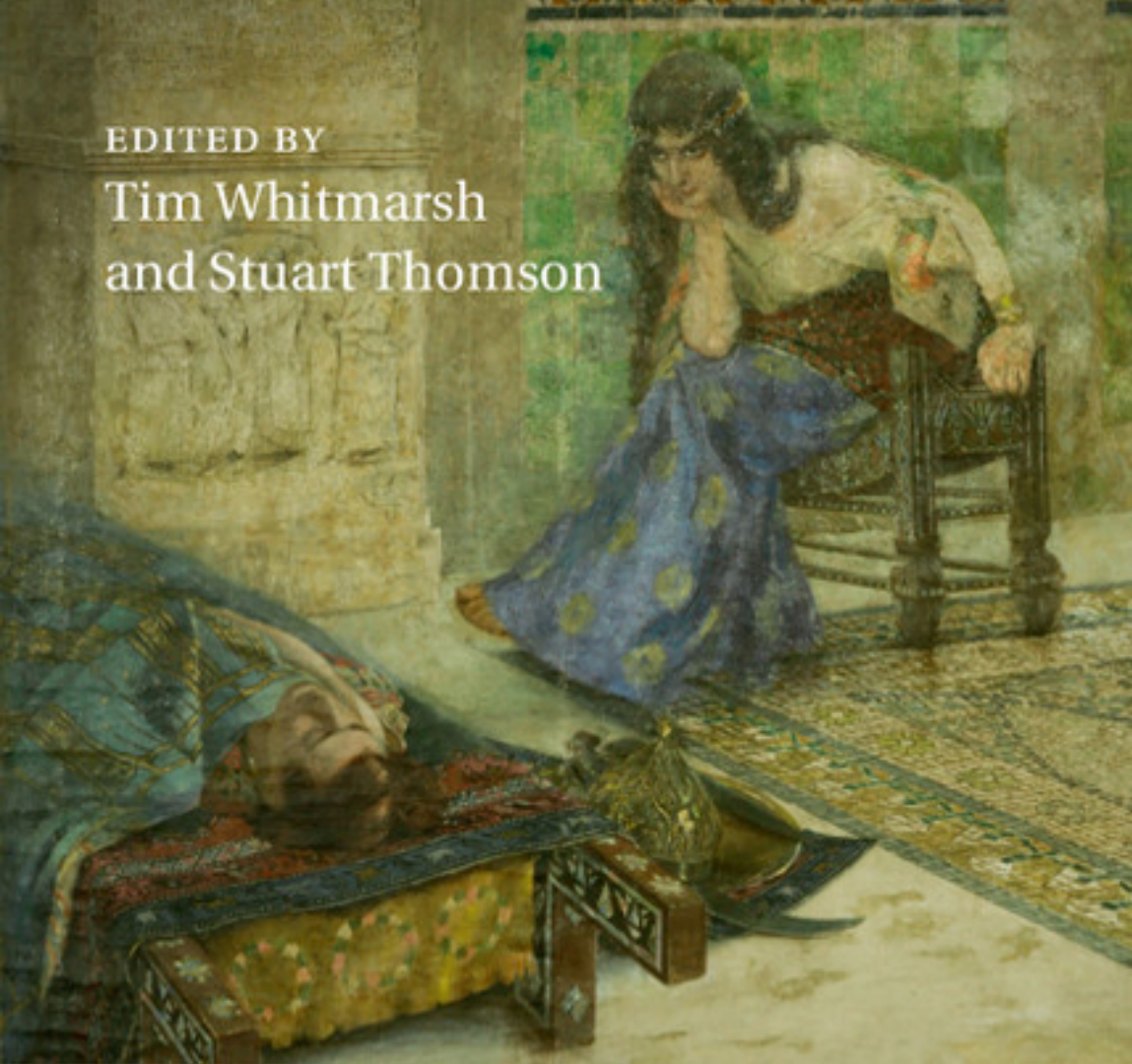


The Romance Between Greece and the East

EDITED BY
Tim Whitmarsh
and Stuart Thomson



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THE ROMANCE BETWEEN GREECE AND THE EAST

The contact zones between the Greco-Roman world and the Near East are the subject of one of the most exciting and fast-moving areas of ancient-world studies. This new collection of essays, by world-renowned experts (and some new voices) in Greco-Roman, Jewish, Egyptian, Mesopotamian and Persian literature, focuses specifically on prose fiction, or 'the ancient novel'. Twenty chapters either offer fresh readings – from an intercultural perspective – of familiar texts (such as the biblical Esther and Ecclesiastes, Xenophon of Ephesus' *Ephesian Story*, and Dictys of Crete's *Journal*) or introduce material that may be new to many readers: from Demotic Egyptian papyri through old Avestan hymns to a Turkic translation of the *Life of Aesop*. The volume also considers issues of methodology and the history of scholarship on the topic. A concluding section deals with the question of how narratives, patterns and motifs may have come to be transmitted between cultures.

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TIM WHITMARSH AND STUART THOMSON



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Abbreviations

<i>BNJ</i>	<i>Brill's New Jacoby</i> , ed. I. Worthington. Leiden. Online publication.
<i>BNP</i>	<i>Brill's New Pauly</i> , ed. W. Eder, trans. and ed. W. F. M. Henkelman. Leiden, 2007.
<i>Brit.Libr.Add.</i>	British Library Additional Manuscript (cited by name of collection and inventory number).
<i>FGrH</i>	<i>Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker</i> , eds. F. Jacoby <i>et al.</i> Berlin and Leiden, 1876–1959.
<i>GCN</i>	<i>Groningen Colloquia on the Novel</i> .
<i>GGA</i>	<i>Göttingische Gelehrte Anzeigen</i> .
<i>JPS</i>	<i>Jewish Publication Society Hebrew-English Tanakh. The Traditional Hebrew Text and the New JPS Translation</i> . 2nd edn Philadelphia, 2003.
<i>Lex.Äg.</i>	<i>Lexikon der Ägyptologie</i> . 7 vols. Wiesbaden, 1972–92.
<i>OGIS</i>	<i>Orientis Graeci inscriptiones selectae</i> , ed. W. Dittenberger. 2 vols. Leipzig, 1903–5.
<i>P.Amherst</i>	Amherst papyrus.
<i>P.Berol.</i>	Berlin papyrus.
<i>P.Hibeh</i>	Hibeh papyrus.
<i>P.Leid.Dem.</i>	Leiden papyrus (Demotic collection).
<i>P.Lond.Lit.</i>	London papyrus (in <i>Greek Papyri in the British Museum</i> . 7 vols. London, 1893–1974).
<i>P.Oxy.</i>	Oxyrhynchus papyrus.
<i>P.Yale</i>	Yale papyrus.
<i>PO</i>	<i>Patrologia Orientalis</i> . Paris, 1907–66.
<i>PSI</i>	<i>Papiri greci e latini: pubblicazioni della Società Italiana per la ricerca dei papiri greci e latini in Egitto</i> . Florence, 1912–79.

Other abbreviations are in general standard, and will be easily traced through the *Oxford Classical Dictionary* and *L'Année philologique*.

CHAPTER I

The romance between Greece and the East

Tim Whitmarsh

In what has become one of the most quoted passages of scholarship on the ancient novel, Ben Edwin Perry claims that the first example of the form ‘was deliberately planned and written by an individual author, its inventor. He conceived it on a Tuesday afternoon in July, or some other day or month of the year.’¹ Behind the confrontationally captious phrasing lies an attack on those who suppose that ‘the aesthetic ideal represented by the new form is the result of a series of blindly groping experiments on the part of “forerunners”’.² Classical scholars have indeed always demonstrated an obsessive desire with recovering origins (the more obscure, elusive and time-eroded the better). Yet it does not follow that the novel ‘[sprang] up full grown all at once like Athena from the head of Zeus’ on that Tuesday in July, or at any other time.³ It is true that the imperial romances of Chariton, Xenophon, Achilles, Longus and Heliodorus seem both internally coherent as a genre and without precedent in Hellenistic literature (even if the matter is less settled than is sometimes presumed).⁴ But this body of texts represents only a small portion of antiquity’s novelistic output. The centrality they have assumed in modern criticism (to the extent that the history of the ancient novel is still conventionally written primarily in their orbit) is unhelpful and misleading.⁵

This book largely shuns the ideal romances, and looks instead to a very different body of ancient texts, which collectively stretch the definition of ‘the novelistic’, perhaps even to breaking point. The essays included here

¹ Perry 1967: 175. For a recent restatement of this position, see Tilg 2010, esp. 4–9.

² Perry 1967: 14. ³ Perry 1967: 206.

⁴ E.g. neither Perry 1967 nor Tilg 2010 considers the possibility that *Joseph and Aseneth* may antedate the imperial romances, or indeed the extraordinarily ‘novelistic’ presentation of the story of Zarinaea and Stryangaeus already in the Augustan writer Nicolaus of Damascus (*FGrH* 90 F5 = Ctesias F8c Stronk). Hellenistic prose fiction in general is discussed at Ruiz Montero 1996 and Whitmarsh 2010.

⁵ For example, Karla 2009a, while commendably attempting to shift the spotlight onto texts that have received less attention (particularly the *Life of Aesop*) ends up reinscribing the same centre/fringe model. Several contributors (notably Morales and Hunter) offer constructive critiques of the model.

cover imaginative texts written (mostly) in Greek between 400 BCE and 200 CE, and composed in or projected onto Anatolia, Carthage, Egypt, Judaea, Mesopotamia and Phoenicia. I write 'imaginative' rather than 'fictional', because the category of 'fiction' is too narrow and culture-specific: it already sets up the categories in too restrictive terms. While we might claim a developed sense of fictionality for the Greco-Roman world,⁶ and perhaps in the Egyptian too (where sophisticated story-telling was already mature in the second millennium),⁷ the category makes little sense in other contexts. Did, for example, Jewish and Christian readers think *Joseph and Aseneth* was 'fictional'? Such questions are as unanswerable as they are misguided, for (as Paul Veyne argues) criteria of truth in narrative are fluid, culture-specific and not even always salient. These texts are not 'fictional', but that observation only exposes the limitations of our own truth-fiction dyad: 'si ma présente vérité de l'homme et des choses était vraie, la culture universelle deviendrait aussi fausse'.⁸

In other words, while this book focuses on novel-like texts – inventive prose narratives – a policy decision has been taken to avoid hard-and-fast generic definitions of 'the novel', definitions that would inevitably risk both ontological arbitrariness and epistemological presumption. Focusing on normative definitions of the novel risks precisely the 'centrism' discussed in my opening paragraph. What is under investigation here is precisely not the set of comfortable norms that guarantee membership of a genre, but the complex of difficult questions raised at the boundaries of genre definition.

Genre is far from the only, or even the most important, term under erasure. Or, rather, if genres are culture-specific, then decentring genre also means decentring culture. This is a book primarily about ancient Greek literature, and almost all of the texts were composed in Greek (all of them within sight of it). Yet rather than helping us to delineate a coherent 'Greek culture', they challenge the very idea. In the body of novelistic writing under scrutiny here, Greekness emerges less as a recognisable habitus, an acknowledged repertoire of cultural 'moves', than as a *language* that agglutinates different cultures in all their alterity. The question of whether a text like the Greek translation of the Egyptian myth of the Solar eye (see West's chapter) or the Hellenistic Greek books of the Hebrew Bible (see Kneebone's chapter) are 'genuine', 'proper', 'authentic' Greek sets up the question in the wrong terms. Classicists are used to thinking of 'Greek culture' as solid and self-evident, perpetuated through the ages by

⁶ Rösler 1980, Gill and Wiseman 1993 and Finkelberg 1998 are fundamental.

⁷ Parkinson 2009 offers an interesting attempt to reconstruct this performance culture.

⁸ Veyne 1983: 136.

repetition of certain forms of social praxis (religion, education, athletics, etc.). But such a 'traditional' conception was only one aspect of Greekness. Collective identities, as Stuart Hall reminds us, have many different modalities: they *can* be defensive, conservative and resistant to hybridity, but they need not be.⁹ In Ptolemaic Egypt, for example, where ethnic groups were taxed differently, those classed as 'Greeks' included ethnic Egyptians working in the administration, and some Jews. In this context, Greekness was defined in a much more capacious (but no less rigorous) way than most scholars would be prepared to admit.¹⁰ Scholars of classical literature (even the phrase betrays exclusionary instincts) have, by contrast, typically cleaved to the most conservative definitions of Greekness possible. The reasons for this lie deep in the history of the formation of the discipline, which has shaped its practitioners into guardians of cultural and aesthetic value. This is not the occasion to explore those reasons, but it is certainly time to dispense with the prejudices that have followed from them.

The Greek novel and Greek culture

The history of the ancient novel has too often been written within contours still crudely defined by nineteenth-century philology. The pivotal figure here is Erwin Rohde, whose *Der griechische Roman und seine Vorläufer* ('The Greek novel and its predecessors'),¹¹ a masterpiece of nineteenth-century German philology, is still a must-read for students of the ancient Greek romance. Rohde's *magnum opus*, published in 1876 when he was a mere 31, offered the first critical account of the Greek novel, as well as (re-)inventing the idea of 'the second sophistic'.¹² Yet for all his learning and acuity, Rohde was, in the final analysis, concerned primarily with racial polemics. The book is an attack on Pierre-Daniel Huet, whose attribution of the origins of the novel to 'the orientals' – itself a gesture mired in colonial politics (see Vasunia's chapter in this volume) – offended Rohde's sensibilities. The 'strange qualities of Greek novels' should not, he argues, be attributed to 'oriental influence'.¹³ If you look more closely, he continues, you will see that it is a question not of dependence on 'foreign culture-elements'

⁹ S. Hall 1992.

¹⁰ Thompson 1997: 247–8; the Ptolemies 'were granting dispensation to those prepared to "go Greek"' (248). More mysterious still, Thompson notes, were the privileges granted to the 'Persians'. Who can they have been?

¹¹ Rohde 1876. For an account of Rohde's cultural politics, his response to Huet and Martin Braun's response to him, see Whitmarsh 2011b.

¹² See briefly Whitmarsh 2005: 6–8. ¹³ Rohde 1876: 4.

(*fremder Kulturelemente*) but of ‘the disposition of the Greek national spirit’ (*die Disposition des griechischen Volksgeistes*).¹⁴ In Rohde’s view, post-classical Greek culture was imperilled by threats both from Rome and more particularly from the effeminate, sensual, despotic East, which he repeatedly describes as *ungeheuer* (‘immense’, ‘numerous’, ‘monstrous’).¹⁵ Set against this faceless, servile, anonymity, the ‘second sophistic’, in Rohde’s view, constituted an attempt to reclaim manly ‘individuality’ (*Individualismus*) for the Greeks. Rohde’s Hegelian interpretation of the novel as an expression of ‘national’ sentiment has, of course, not gone unnoticed, but the challenges have typically come in the form of far-fetched hypotheses of ‘influence’ based on claimed similarities between Greek narratives and chronologically remote west Asian texts: Egyptian stories from the second millennium BCE,¹⁶ Sumerian literature of the third,¹⁷ or imagined antecedents of mediaeval Persian texts.¹⁸ Because such accounts have not in general won conviction, the reverse position has been largely unchallenged. Rohde’s idea that ‘the Greek novel’ is defiantly, *defensively* Greek has remained the dominant position.¹⁹

We have become so habituated to thinking of Greek culture in euro-centric terms that we have by and large ceased to question whether the boundaries really were that clearly defined on the ground in antiquity. When modern readers think of ancient Greek literature, they look principally to authors like Homer, Hesiod, Pindar, the great Athenian dramatists, historians and orators, Plato. If our tastes are more *recherché*, then Theocritus, Callimachus and Apollonius of Rhodes might spring to mind, even Plutarch, Lucian and the ‘ideal’ Greek novelists.²⁰ But in fact such authors represent only a tiny sample of the Greek texts composed in antiquity. Could we imagine instead a history of Greek literature that incorporated the Greco-Egyptian *Alexander Romance*, the Septuagint, the fragmentary historians of the Near East, Ctesias, Manetho, Berossus, Philo of Byblos?

¹⁴ Rohde 1876: 4–5.

¹⁵ Particularly in the extraordinary lecture on the novella reproduced as an appendix to the third edition of *Der griechische Roman*, where Rohde argues that this, too, is a Greek rather than an eastern invention. The word appears at Rohde 1914: 578, 579, 598.

¹⁶ Barns 1956. A much more credible hypothesis suggests the influence of works of demotic Egyptian, which is at least contemporaneous: see Rutherford 1997, 2000, and Rutherford’s and Stephens’ chapters in this volume.

¹⁷ Anderson 1984. ¹⁸ Davis 2002.

¹⁹ E.g. the novels display ‘a profound satisfaction with being Greek’ (Swain 1996: 109); ‘The Greek novel is generally not questioned as a Greek art form’ (Kuch 1996: 220).

²⁰ My own *Ancient Greek Literature* (Whitmarsh 2004) followed precisely this track, albeit – I hope – showing awareness of the constructedness of this tradition.

Disciplinary divisions and the inherited intellectual categories create blindspots, which it behoves us to interrogate.

The question as to what is 'Greek' about 'Greek culture' is immensely controversial, mired as it is in nationalist (and indeed anti-nationalist) ideology. The nineteenth and early twentieth centuries' massive overinvestment in the myth of the origins of European culture has ensured that in a self-reflexive, post-colonially aware age, no one can approach ancient Greek identity from a position of ideological neutrality. Definitions of ancient Greekness are inevitably overdetermined by political considerations in the present. This situation has, of course, been compounded by Martin Bernal's *Black Athena* trilogy and its debaters (not to mention its precursors, all too often ignored).²¹

Ancient Greece was not a nation state. Authoritative delineations of identity were impossible in an environment with no passports, where citizenship was tied to cities rather than to countries, and where the borders of the Greek territory were only hazy and permeable. As ever, it is the marginal cases that are the most instructive. Modern debates between Greeks and Macedonians over the identity of Alexander the Great, for example, are only the latest stage in a history of contestation that stretches back to his own time, and indeed before that.²² It is arguably better, however, to see ancient Macedonians as neither definitively Greek nor non-Greek, but as *constitutively* marginal, defined by precisely their liminal position. The superimposition onto ancient geopolitical space of modern criteria of nationality, which are often (albeit not always) crisper and more clearly defined, is as misleading as it is anachronistic.

When European scholars first raised the question of Greek identity, in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century European scholarship, the emphasis was largely (albeit often implicitly) upon race.²³ The Greeks were imagined as Indo-Europeans, which meant in practice ancestors of the very scholars who were doing the imagining.²⁴ Sometimes it was even fantasised

²¹ Most notably by *Black Athena* and the responses to it. See Bernal 1987, 1991, 2006; cf. 2001. Discussion: Lefkowitz and Rogers 1996, and Bhambra, Orrells and Roynon 2011. A notable predecessor in the field of Afrocentric history is Diop 1974; Howe 1998 provides an interesting, if unsympathetic, overview of the whole phenomenon.

²² Herodotus records an issue over the identity of 'the Macedonians' (by which he seems to mean the royal dynasty), coming down on the side of Greekness (5.22; 8.143–4, however, seems more equivocal). Isocrates hails Alexander's father Philip as a Greek leader who will take vengeance on the Persian 'barbarians' (*Ad Phil.* 32–4; 68; 76–7; 111–15); Demosthenes by contrast sees him as a barbarian threat (*Ol.* 1.17; 1.24; 3.31; 3.45 etc.). See in general J. Hall (2001).

²³ McCoskey 2012 contains much important reflection on this nineteenth-century legacy, as well as an attempt to reclaim the term 'race'.

²⁴ Survey at J. Hall 2002: 36–8.

that a northern-European ‘Dorian migration’ had catalysed the achievements of Greek civilisation (the German for ‘Indo-European’ remains to this day *indogermanisch*). For reasons that do not need labouring, the idea of biological race as a category of historical explanation has all but disappeared since the 1930s.²⁵ Race has been subtly superseded by a term that is at first sight less threatening. ‘Culture’ has the advantage of relocating identity from (hypothecated) reality into the sphere of collective fiction, of imaginary communities and invented traditions.²⁶ But do we really know what Greek culture is, or was? Who owns the right to define certain forms of practice as Greek or not? We can, for sure, appeal to the ancients’ own statements on the matter, but these tend (inevitably) to be circumscribed by local context, rather than authoritative and objective judgements.²⁷

The likelihood is, however, that classical scholars themselves, self-appointed guardians of intellectual and aesthetic value as they are, erect much firmer boundaries between the Greek and the non-Greek than ancients themselves did. The specific risk for specialists of Greek literature is of conflating *culture* (in the ‘anthropological’ sense of the collective matrix of *praxeis* that are taken to define a people) with *high culture*, the locus of a privileged body of texts and artefacts. In other words, Greek culture becomes ‘good’ culture, and the scholars who define what is good become gatekeepers of cultural values. Every literary classicist working in a university knows that arguments over undergraduate syllabuses, postgraduate research areas, new appointments and so forth are routinely couched in terms of the claimed quality of one particular body of texts or another. (One of the Press referees of this volume expressed, in the midst of a pleasingly constructive review, her or his desire ‘to get back to reading some Longus’!)

This tendency in classical scholarship was given impetus by Werner Jaeger’s influential three-volume *Paideia: the ideals of Greek culture*.²⁸ Jaeger

²⁵ For a compact critique of ‘race’, see Isaac 2004: 25–39.

²⁶ See esp. S. Hall 1992: 292: ‘national identities are not things we are born with, but are formed and transformed within and in relation to *representation*’. I discussed and adopted this definition of culture at Whitmarsh 2001: 35–8. For a critique of the term ‘culture’, see McCoskey 2012: 93.

²⁷ As in the famous case of Herodotus 8.144.2, where *to Hellēnikon* (Greekness/‘the Greek thing’) is defined in terms of ‘sharing blood and language, with temples to the gods and religious rites in common, and sharing a way of life’. Context matters: this ‘definition’ appears in the midst of a speech at a moment of high drama, when the Athenians are rejecting Persian overtures (and, as it happens, slapping down a Macedonian whose claims to Greekness have themselves been challenged earlier on, even if Herodotus himself is convinced (5.22)).

²⁸ Jaeger 1954, which is the fourth and latest edition; the first volume of the German original appeared in 1934, and of the English translation in 1939. ‘Ideals’ and ‘culture’ in the title, however, are Higher’s (the translator’s) innovation: the German original was called *die Formung des griechischen Menschen*.

left Nazi Germany in the 1930s (with his Jewish wife) and settled at Harvard after a spell at the University of Chicago. Understandably resistant to racial definitions of Greekness,²⁹ he argued instead, on a monumental scale, that it should be understood in terms of humanist values, and in particular to the centrality of education to human civilisation (*paideia*). The insistent elitism underpinning Jaeger's vision of antiquity is well known;³⁰ the 'specific character of Hellenism',³¹ in his eyes, was a mirror image of the ideals of an aristocratic European of the early twentieth century.

The preoccupation with cultural value has not just shaped the classical canon in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries; it has also shaped the way in which we tell the very story of ancient literature. Ever since Jaeger, the idea that Greekness was in antiquity constituted by *paideia*, a word that can denote either the process of education or the cultivated civility that (at least for the rich) is taken to issue from it, has steered classical scholarship, particularly in relation to the Hellenistic and imperial eras. More recent critics have, for sure, been more sensitive to the iniquities of cultural hierarchy implicit in this model, more alive to the *Macht* that accompanies *Bildung*.³² But they have not, in general, questioned the idea that literary value lay at the heart of ancient apperceptions of Greek identity. Time and again one comes across the assumption (expressed in a variety of forms) that the Hellenistic period adopted a 'culturally-based definition of Hellenic identity',³³ along the lines of Isocrates' famous claim that 'those who are called Hellenes are those who share our culture (*paideusis*) rather than a common biological inheritance' (*Panegy.* 50). 'Culture' here need not mean narrowly 'aristocratic elite culture', but in practice the slide from one to the other is easy and imperceptible.

It is undeniable that some elements in ancient society wanted to see the Greek world in this way. Callimachus, Plutarch and Lucian would no doubt have agreed broadly with the conclusions described in the previous paragraph. But we should guard against any assumption that such rare birds described the norm (even if they undoubtedly sought to *prescribe* it). There should be no presumption that literary practice operated according to a single, inflexible rule. The case of the Ptolemaic tax bands has already shown us that there was more than one way of defining Greekness; the reasons

²⁹ Even if he cannot entirely shake them off: see p. xv ('our kinship with Greece is not merely racial...').

³⁰ Jaeger's 'aristocratic humanism' is one of the themes running through the essays in Calder 1992.

³¹ Jaeger 1954: xxiii. ³² See Schmitz 1997.

³³ J. Hall 2002: 224 (who does, however, raise the question of how widely held such beliefs were in antiquity).

why classical scholars have superelevated on the Isocratean/Jaegerian model tells us, no doubt, more about their own priorities than about the ancient world itself.

Cultural pluralism in antiquity

How much cultural dialogue took place between Greece and the Near East in antiquity? For the archaic period, the efforts of scholars such as Walter Burkert, Martin West and Johannes Haubold (who appears in this volume) have brought into play a vast amount of evidence for cultural transfer.³⁴ Much of this evidence, admittedly, is circumstantial, and some of it controversial;³⁵ but taken as a whole it has tipped the balance of presumption in favour of those who would see the early Greek cultural economy as tightly interwoven with those of its various eastern neighbours.

Yet while there is a broad recognition that Greek culture was shaped in the archaic era by contact with Near Eastern cultures, there has been far less attention paid to the possibility of an ongoing dialogue through the classical, Hellenistic and imperial eras. During these ages, it is generally assumed, the dominance of *paideia* meant that Greek culture remained largely insulated from the intellectual culture around it (at least until widespread Christianisation brought Greeks into contact with Jewish scripture). It is sometimes maintained that the distinctive character of Hellenistic Greece was its relentless monoglottism: 'The intellectual influence of the barbarians was . . . felt in the Hellenistic world only to the extent to which they were capable of expressing themselves in Greek', writes Momigliano. 'No Greek read the Upanishads, the Gathas and the Egyptian wisdom books.'³⁶ This kind of claim is deeply misguided. For a start, the choice of examples is skewed: few Greeks are likely to have come across the (Indian) Upanishads, or the Avestan Gathas (on which see Selden in this volume), and if they did encounter Egyptian instructional texts they are unlikely to have seen much cultural value in them. But there were certainly lively bilingual cultures from at least the fifth century BCE, even if they have been oddly neglected in much scholarship.³⁷ There are numerous literary works that are or pose as translations or transcriptions from Near Eastern sources: even leaving

³⁴ Burkert 1992, esp. 88–127; M. L. West 1997; Haubold 2002.

³⁵ See e.g. Kelly 2007 and 2008; more general methodological issues in Kelly forthcoming. I thank the author for advance sight of this important discussion.

³⁶ Momigliano 1975: 7–8.

³⁷ M. L. West 1997: 606–9. West quotes David Lewis on the 'strange presupposition that there was a political and linguistic iron curtain between Greeks and Persians' (606).

aside the case of Herodotus and his much-discussed ‘sources’, we have the prominent examples of Ctesias of Cnidos (see further Wiesehöfer, this volume) claiming to have consulted the royal records of the Persian court for his *Persian History*;³⁸ the *Periplus* of Hanno the Carthaginian (supposedly translated from Phoenician); Menander of Ephesus, a historian of Phoenicia writing in the second or third century BCE, who ‘translated the ancient records of Tyre from the Phoenician dialect into the Greek language’;³⁹ and figures such as Manetho (see Dillon, this volume), Berossus (Haubold, this volume), and Philo of Byblos. Of course, the immediate response from some will be that most of these figures are not in fact Greeks, but Hellenised Near Easterners. But as we have seen above, this distinction reflects a confident cultural ‘ontology’ born of modern nationalism, and which was not found systematically in antiquity. If we wish to understand how ‘Greek culture’ operated, we must consider the full range of evidence, not simply that which best fits our preconceived ideas.

Multilingual public inscriptions also testify to bilingualism on a wide scale. The earliest known multilingual source that incorporates Greek is the Letoon inscription of the mid-fourth century BCE, which also features Lycian and Aramaic. Dedications featuring both Greek and Semitic inscriptions have been found far afield: not just in obvious contact zones such as Cyprus, Malta, Palmyra and the Negev, where they might be expected, but also on Cos and Rhodes, in Athens and Miletus, and elsewhere in the Greek world.⁴⁰ It is important, of course, not to offer facile generalisations for the interpretation of such material, which reflect a wide diversity of intentions and local circumstances. But at the very least we can conclude that the phenomenon of multilingual inscriptions articulates a level of comfort with the concept of cultural liminality on the part of the individuals or societies that erect them. Inscriptions are projections, or performances, of identity; bilingual inscriptions thus show that bicultural identity was a workable stance to adopt.

The inscriptional record is the tip of a vast historical iceberg. Bilingual or bicultural individuals and communities existed, but often we know next to nothing about their experiences, their instincts, their preferences, their emotional and intellectual universes. We have no traces of Phoenician or

³⁸ Diod. Sic. 2.32.4 = *FGrH* 688 T3, F5; also Diod. Sic. 2.22.5 = *FGrH* F1b. Plut. *Art.* 13.4 suggests Ctesias’ competence in Persian; see in general Stronk (2010) 21–5. For other persophone Greeks in the classical era, see Thuc. 1.138.1 and Plut. *Them.* 29.5 (Themistocles), Hdt. 6.29.2 (Histiaeus), Ath. *Deipn.* 535e (Alcibiades). (I owe these references to M. L. West 1997: 607 n. 60.)

³⁹ Jos. *Ant. Jud.* 8.144 = *FGrH* 783 T3(a); cf. T3 (b–c), also on Josephus’ testimony.

⁴⁰ See e.g. Fraser 1970. Adams, Janse and Swain 2002 offer a series of discussions of the phenomenon of bilingualism in the ancient world, with much Greek material.

Palmyrene literature. The world of Phoenician story-telling, as we know it from Greek sources, is a playful fictional construct, a spectral other created from the resources of the Greco-Roman tradition rather than from any real connection to Phoenicia itself (Ní Mheallaigh, this volume).⁴¹ Even Carthage, a vitally important Punic city throughout antiquity, speaks to us only through Greco-Roman fantasies (the most famous of which is the *Aeneid*); certainly, as Harrison shows in this volume, it is hard to use Apuleius of Madaura as a straightforwardly bicultural text.

Similarly elusive are Anatolian narrative traditions. The Ionian coast was, of course, a major point of intersection between Greek and pre-Greek cultures, and our deeper understanding of Hittite literature in particular has given a particular focus to what is distinctive about the Trojan War traditions.⁴² It also became a contact zone between Greece and Achaemenid Persia, to the extent that late sixth- and early fifth-century Ionian philosophy composed in Greek is likely to draw heavily on Persian thought: ‘a period of active Iranian influence stands out sharply in the development of Greek thought, from c. 550 to c. 480 BC’.⁴³ Yet tracing the interaction of cultural systems in later times is extremely difficult – and perhaps misguided, since the degree of Hellenisation was so intense and sustained that there was, by the Hellenistic period at any rate, no longer any meaningful differentiation between Greek and non-Greek in this hybrid space. Tagliabue in this volume, for example, completely sidesteps the question of Anatolian influence on the Ephesian novelist Xenophon, preferring instead to consider how Ionia was liminally positioned in the Greek imaginary, between Greece and the Near East. But perhaps even if there is no possibility of separating out Greek and Anatolian layers, we can see something distinctively Ionian in the tradition of short, scurrilous or pointed story-telling tracked by Bowie in this volume. Eduard Schwartz’s hypothesis that the Greek novel originated in Ionia is certainly reductive and overly linear;⁴⁴ but there does seem to be consistent association, from Herodotus and Xanthus of Lydia onwards, between this part of the world and punchy, risqué anecdotes – even if these were in no sense exclusive to that region.⁴⁵

⁴¹ Philo of Byblos is a complex case, but my own view is that this is more ‘Phoenician mirage’. Bonnet 2010 surveys the history of critical speculation as to whether he transmits genuine Phoenician material.

⁴² See Collins, Bachvarova and Rutherford 2008, with the contributions of Bryce and Bachvarova specifically on the Homeric material.

⁴³ M. L. West 1971, at 239.

⁴⁴ Schwartz 1896.

⁴⁵ Trenkner 1958: 168–77 offers further qualification of the ‘Ionian theory’ of the origin of the novella.

We do marginally better with Aramaic, but the fifth-century BCE *Ahiqar*, certain sections of the biblical Ezra and Daniel and the *targumim* are hardly representative of the huge, international significance of the *de facto* language of the Achaemenid empire.⁴⁶ Nevertheless, it is striking that *Ahiqar* leaves visible traces in the Greek narrative tradition, particularly in the *Life of Aesop*, a distinctively intercultural text that both absorbs eastern material and thereafter heads east itself.⁴⁷ Avlamis in this volume explores the extraordinary, multi-faceted nature of this text's interculturality, a feature that is in fact already prompted in the narrative itself (where Aesop's travels abroad mirror the *Life's* own international range).

For Persia, by contrast, we have a number of late-antique/early mediaeval texts containing material that can be dated much earlier on linguistic grounds; Selden in this volume explores their representations of the Greek world. For Mesopotamia we have a rich supply of earlier Sumerian and Akkadian narrative literature, but for the first millennium BCE only echoes in Greek sources of court sagas, however refracted they are.⁴⁸ One particularly significant repertory of Babylonian narrative traditions has to do with the mythical queen Semiramis, probably based on the real-life Assyrian Sammu-ramat; classical scholarship is beginning to realise just how powerful this material was, and how far its influence reached into Greek narrative literature, beyond even the so-called *Ninus* romance (see Dalley, this volume). Wiesehöfer in this volume discusses the fascinating case of Ctesias, an Anatolian Greek who at the turn of the fifth and fourth centuries served as doctor to Darius II and Artaxerxes II; his histories (which come to us largely mediated through Diodorus' summary) seem to have laid claim to an insider's perspective on Mesopotamian, Median and Persian history and culture (we have already mentioned his use of Persian 'sources'). Ctesias, as Wiesehöfer notes, has often been seen as a romantic or 'novelistic' historian; it is likely that his original writings were heavily influential on Chariton and his successors.⁴⁹ Haubold, meanwhile, considers the equally intriguing Berossus, a Babylonian of Seleucid times who blended Mesopotamian narrative traditions with Greek motifs and forms. Berossus is less obviously novelistic than Ctesias; but it would be wonderful to compare the complete text of his *Babyloniaca* with Iamblichus' second-century CE romance

⁴⁶ The dialect of Aramaic that we call Syriac, however, is very well represented from Late Antiquity onwards, when the local language and script of Edessa became central to Nestorian Christianity.

⁴⁷ For bibliography on *Ahiqar* and the *Life of Aesop*, see Avlamis in this volume, n. 41. S. R. West 2003b assesses evidence for contiguity between *Ahiqar* and the story of Cambyses and Croesus at Hdt. 3.36. On biblical translation, see further below.

⁴⁸ Surveyed e.g. at Stoneman 2012: 6–9. ⁴⁹ See further Whitmarsh forthcoming b.

of the same name. In any case, the crucial point is that what we have with both Ctesias and Berossus is, it seems, genuine cultural hybridisation. With authors as interstitial as these, it is impossible to stratify either into 'authentically' distinct 'Greek' and 'Near Eastern' layers: what counts, rather, is the dynamic creation of something new from the hybrid.

For Egypt, by contrast, the evidence is rich, thanks to the ever-increasing store of Demotic papyri, texts that offer extraordinary testimony to the contraflowing traffic between the two cultural systems (see Ryholt in this volume). Here we are blessed with coeval material, so that we can thicken out the context in which biculturality operated.⁵⁰ It is an arresting fact that 34 per cent of all known 'archives' (collections of texts found in the same archaeological location) from Egypt contain both Greek and Egyptian materials; this testifies to an astonishing level of bilingualism (see also West, this volume).⁵¹ Magic formularies can be found offering Greek and Egyptian versions of the same spells.⁵² Translators must have abounded: alongside the myth of the Solar Eye (discussed by West in this volume) we can set, for example, an Oxyrhynchus papyrus recording an aretology of Imouthes, the healing god and son of Ptah, which contains an elaborate preface detailing the psychological effort required to render the Egyptian in Greek (*P.Oxy.* 1381). As Rutherford and Stephens both argue in this volume, imaginative narrative literature was a particularly fruitful point of confluence: prime examples are the famous *Alexander Romance*, with its imbricated Greek and Egyptian material (not to mention its presentation of Alexander himself as a mixed-race Greco-Egyptian), and the so-called *Sesonchosis Romance* (related to the Sesostris traditions discussed by Ryholt in this volume).⁵³ As Ctesias and Berossus do for Babylon, the figure of Manetho stands out here, a sophisticated relayer of Egyptian material in Greek guise (Dillon, this volume).

By some distance, however, the best evidence for intercultural narrative traditions in the Hellenistic and early imperial period, however, centres on biblical traditions. Second-Temple Jewish culture was extraordinarily vibrant, responsive and adaptive:⁵⁴ we can trace the depth of engagement not only in Philo of Alexandria and Josephus (see Kneebone in this volume), for whom complete works survive, but also in a wealth of fragmentary

⁵⁰ For bilingualism, see Papaconstantinou 2010. Religious hybridisation is explored by Fowden 1986.

⁵¹ Clarysse 2010: 58–9. ⁵² Dieleman 2005.

⁵³ For the *Alexander Romance* as intercultural text, see Stoneman 2008 and Stoneman, Erickson and Netton 2012; Whitmarsh forthcoming b, ch. 7. For *Sesonchosis*, see Stephens and Winkler 1995: 246–66; the new edition by Yvona Trnka-Amrhein (including new text) is keenly awaited.

⁵⁴ Superior surveys include Barclay 1996, Gruen 1998, 2002 and Collins 2000.

material, including the historical works of Eupolemus and Artapanus, the *Exagoge* of Ezekiel (recounting the Exodus story in the form of an Attic tragedy), and the hexameter poems of Theodotus and (a different) Philo.⁵⁵ The survival of such treasures from Greco-Jewish culture is due of course to the value it has been accorded continuously since antiquity, which has guaranteed its preservation; and in particular, to the Christians Clement of Alexandria and Eusebius of Caesarea, who ransacked Alexander Polyhistor's *On the Jews* (first century BCE) for diverse Greek-language fragments based on themes drawn from the Hebrew Bible.⁵⁶ (Jews, by contrast, in general turned progressively further away from the Greek language in the aftermath of Vespasian's destruction of Jerusalem; the emergence of Rabbinical Judaism as the dominant model was not kind to the preservation of Greek texts.) But even so, we should remain aware of how slender these threads are, and of how much has been lost.

Throughout the Hellenistic and early Roman periods, Jews made wide use of the Greek language. Sometimes, as is the case with the translation of the biblical *Wisdom of Ben Sirach* (*Ecclesiasticus*), rendered in the second century BCE, this was done so as to facilitate communication with fellow Jews in the Greek-speaking diaspora: 'for those abroad (*en tēi paroikia*) who wish to be lovers of learning (*philomathein*), by preparing themselves for living according to the law'. Sometimes Greek texts could even be used to articulate anti-Greek sensibilities, notably in the four narratives known to us as the Maccabees. In 2 Maccabees, the presence near the citadel of Jerusalem of a gymnasium is lamented (along with the widespread wearing of the hat known as a *petasos*) as a sign that the city is 'at the peak of Hellenism' (4.12–13, at 13); the *palaestra*, the wrestling-ground, is the site of (what is for Jews) 'illegal activity' (4.14).

Such texts suggest that Greek was used to communicate with other Jews in a way that suggested minimal cultural 'marking': to write in Greek was not to compromise one's Jewishness in any strong sense (note, however, that the Ben Sirach prologue does suggest that Hebrew is a better, more sacred language: 'what was originally expressed in Hebrew does not have the same force (*ou . . . isodunamei*) when translated into another language').⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Discussion of Ezekiel, Theodotus and Philo and further bibliography in Whitmarsh forthcoming a. A papyrus from Oxyrhynchus, soon to be published by Dirk Obbink, shows that Ezekiel (or Polyhistor) was still being copied in the second century CE.

⁵⁶ Freudenthal 1874–5.

⁵⁷ The possible meanings of *isodunamein* here are explored by De Crom 2008, who argues plausibly against those who would see the Ben Sirach translator as intervening at a technical level in a debate over the LXX translation. For more on this famous passage, see Brock 1979: 76 and Van der Louw 2007: 33–4.

On other occasions, however, it becomes clear that rendering Hebrew or Aramaic into Greek promotes communication with a Gentile audience. Despite his misgivings elsewhere about his ability with Greek (surely a rhetorical *captatio benevolentiae*),⁵⁸ Josephus is very clear that both his *Jewish Antiquities*⁵⁹ and his *Jewish War* are written to disseminate the text to the wider world; the latter, indeed, explicitly substitutes for the author's earlier version in Aramaic (or, less plausibly, Hebrew)⁶⁰ that was targeted at 'the inland barbarians' (*BJ* 1.3), a phrase he apparently uses to cover 'the Parthians, the Babylonians, the remotest Arabians, and those of our nation beyond the Euphrates, together with the Adiabeni' (1.6).

The most significant act of cultural and linguistic translation in the Hellenistic era was, however, undoubtedly the creation of a Greek Bible.⁶¹ As Tessa Rajak's recent work has emphasised, the Septuagint is not simply a shadow of the Hebrew original, but a work of art in its own right.⁶² Choices of vocabulary are deliberate and reflect the circumstances of the Hellenistic diaspora. The adoption of numerous Hebraisms and pseudo-Hebraisms, like the frequent use of *kai* ('and') to mirror the Hebrew *vav* (which has specific grammatical functions), and *idou* ('behold') in imitation of Hebrew *hinnay*, are probably the results not of unintended 'interference' between the two languages, but of conscious policy choices designed to produce a sociolect suitable for this highly self-conscious community.⁶³ There are, indeed, other reasons to guard against overemphasising the Septuagint's status as a 'translation' subordinate to an original. A number of Hellenistic biblical texts survive *only* in Greek, and interestingly (for our purposes) these are the narrative ones: the four Maccabees, Tobit and Judith. This does not, of course, mean that there were necessarily no prior Hebrew or Aramaic versions, and indeed for Tobit fragments of both Hebrew and Aramaic versions have been found at Qumran; but this is uncertain for the other texts, and positively unlikely for 2 and 4 Maccabees.⁶⁴ Other texts (Daniel, and Esther: see Kneebone, this volume) that do survive in Hebrew

⁵⁸ *Ant.* 20.263; *Ap.* 1.50. ⁵⁹ *Ant.* 1.5; 16.174, 177.

⁶⁰ On the question of the identity of Josephus' 'native language', see Rajak 1983: 230–2.

⁶¹ I can only scratch the very surface of this vast topic. Rajak 2009 offers an excellent, sophisticated cultural history of the LXX, to which I am much indebted in this paragraph; Fernández Marcos 2000 is a substantial account primarily of the debates over the nature of the language and the origin and function of the text, and to its *Nachleben* in antiquity; Silva and Jobes 2005 offer a serviceable introduction, with a particular emphasis on text-critical debates.

⁶² Rajak 2009, with further literature. ⁶³ Rajak 2009, esp. 125–75 – again with copious references.

⁶⁴ 2 Maccabees because it presents itself as the epitome of a work by Jason of Cyrene (2: 24), which would probably have been in Greek; it is also addressed to the 'Egyptian Jews' (1: 1), who would almost certainly have been Greek-speakers (compare the Ben Sirach prologue). The rhetorical flamboyance of 4 Maccabees has long been taken as a sign of its original composition in Greek.

(or Aramaic) are expanded in the Greek versions. The Greek Bible thus had a life of its own, independent of the Hebrew text.

But we can push one step further. Even the Hebrew Bible, for the confidence it expresses in the uniqueness of the Israelite/Jewish people, is, of course, not culturally monoglot, but formed through centuries of interactions with neighbouring peoples. It is well beyond our scope to explore this point in any detail, but let us briefly note the intriguing hypothesis of significant *Greek* influence on Genesis, recently aired by Bruce Loudon.⁶⁵ Whatever one makes of this claim – and parallels alone often buckle under the argumentative weight placed upon them – it is hard to argue with the underlying principle: no culture in antiquity, be it Jewish, Greek or any other, was born and remained in hermetic isolation. Cultural transfer is not necessarily a relay race, with a prior civilisation handing a perfectly formed baton to a successor; there is, in fact, no reason why contact should not transform both parties simultaneously. Greek craftsmen and mercenaries were certainly known in Palestine in the seventh and sixth centuries; they may well have brought their own song traditions.⁶⁶

On balance, it is safest to conclude that *major* Greek influence on the earliest biblical literature is unlikely, not least because it is hard to imagine that biblical writers would have given more thought to Greeks than to the numerous other foreigners in their midst. Yet the Hebrew Bible was at this early stage still a work in progress, and the Hellenistic era sees much greater hybridisation with the surrounding world – which meant, at this stage, with Persian and Greek cultural traditions. Jennie Barbour's contribution to this volume shows how the figure of the Persian king in the biblical Qohelet ('Ecclesiasticus') seems to draw on narrative traditions shaped by Greek 'othering' of Persia. Emily Kneebone follows the chain of transmission further down, showing how Josephus – a former priest, reinvented as a Roman citizen and writer of Greek – retools the biblical Esther (already a richly intercultural text) to articulate his own diasporic ideology.

The editors are keenly aware that much more could be said about the 'novelistic' nature of much Second-Temple Jewish writing, particularly in the light of Lawrence Wills' studies,⁶⁷ and of the mediating influence of Hellenised Jews like Josephus, who introduced Greek narrative techniques while relaying such stories.⁶⁸ *The Romance between Greece and*

⁶⁵ Loudon 2011, esp. 320–9. ⁶⁶ Hagedorn 2005. ⁶⁷ Wills 1990, 1994, 1995.

⁶⁸ See in particular Braun 1934 and 1938: 44–104 (re-edited in Braun forthcoming) on the Hellenistic 'eroticising' of Jewish scriptural tradition.

Judaism would be a substantial volume in its own right; we have however decided, in the context of what is already a large volume, to stick with a small sample, so as to avoid over-representation. We cannot, however, pass on without mention of *Joseph and Aseneth*, an extraordinary anonymous text that expands into a substantial ‘novel’ the brief mention in Genesis of the patriarch taking an Egyptian wife (41:45; cf. 26:20). As scholars have long noted, this text shows numerous points of contact with the Greek romances of Chariton, Achilles Tatius *et al.*: Aseneth’s egregious beauty, the rumours of it that spread far and wide, the many suitors who come (1.6; very reminiscent of Chariton); her initial rejection of all men (2.1, like Heliodorus’ Charicleia, or *mutatis mutandis* Xenophon’s Habrocomes), and virginity (8.1); Joseph’s beauty (6.7), and its devastating effect on her (6.1); her love-sickness (7.4); marriage (20.6–21.8); their temporary separation (26.1); the appearance of a brutal love-rival, who is eventually defeated (24).⁶⁹ Whether these motifs originate in *Joseph and Aseneth* itself or have been imported from the romance is frustratingly opaque, not least because the dating is so vigorously contested: estimates vary from the second century BCE⁷⁰ to the fourth century CE.⁷¹ But as I have suggested at several points above, intercultural influence should not necessarily be viewed in linear terms, as ‘origination’ in one place and subsequent transfer to another. *Joseph and Aseneth* (as I argue in a forthcoming chapter) self-consciously positions itself as an intercultural text through its emphasis on the intermarriage of the Jewish Joseph and the gentile Aseneth: what matters, thus, is the hybridisation itself, not the lines of influence.⁷²

Transmission and reception

Let us turn, finally, to the question of transmission. It is one thing to note that cultural transfer has taken place, quite another to explain how it may have occurred.⁷³ Martin West has vividly sketched the worlds of trade, mercenary armies and intermarriage that will have existed in the contact zones between the Greek and non-Greek worlds.⁷⁴ Yet it is only in rare cases that we can explore in any kind of detail the intercultural journeys

⁶⁹ Some of these are noted at Philonenko 1968: 43–6; see further S. R. West 1974: 71–5.

⁷⁰ E.g. Bohak 1996. ⁷¹ E.g. Kraemer 1998.

⁷² Whitmarsh forthcoming b, ch. 7; cf. 2012.

⁷³ Ulf 2009 offers an interesting map of possibilities. ⁷⁴ M. L. West 1997: 586–630.

of a given narrative. In the case of the *Alexander Romance*, not only can we plausibly identify Egyptian elements within the text;⁷⁵ there is also an abundance of evidence for the *Romance*'s journeys into other traditions.⁷⁶ The trajectory from Greece to the East of the now-fragmentary romance *Metiochus and Parthenope* has also been mapped out by Hägg and Utas, thanks to their startling discovery of what is demonstrably a Persian version of the story.⁷⁷

A more complex case is the *Life of Aesop*. A version of the Aesopic biography was already known to Aristophanes (who alludes to the Delphic episode at *Wasps* 1446–9); and indeed Leslie Kurke has plausibly reconstructed a widespread consciousness of the wise but subversive Phrygian (ex-)slave across much classical Greek literary production.⁷⁸ Yet the text as we have it (the earliest version of which is unlikely to antedate the Roman era) is something of a multicultural patchwork. Its most famous 'borrowing' comes in the Babylon-Memphis section where (as mentioned above) motifs are clearly taken over from the *Aḥiqar* story first attested in the Aramaic Elephantine papyrus of the fifth century BCE, and which also surfaces in the biblical Tobit.⁷⁹ How *Aḥiqar* entered the Aesop tradition is not absolutely clear: there is no watertight evidence for a Greek version, but both the name and many of the associated stories seem to have been known from at least the fourth century BCE.⁸⁰ What can be traced, however, is – as Avlamis demonstrates in this volume – the reception of the text in Syriac and its transfer thence into Uyghur, the Turkic language of Central and Eastern Asia.

We often speak in this way of 'texts' 'travelling', and surely it has often been the written word that has been the intercultural vehicle *par excellence*. 'Once a thing is put in writing', says Plato's Socrates famously, 'the composition, whatever it may be, drifts all over the place' (*Phdr.* 275d–e). Oxyrhynchus, that tiny window onto antiquity's vast laboratory of textual production, offers abundant evidence of just how many written works must have been carried from their point of origin and recopied in Egypt. Yet the visibility and materiality of ancient papyri should not mislead: stories

⁷⁵ Jasnow 1997. The long-entertained suspicion that a Demotic version lies behind the so-called 'Nectanebo's deception' section of the *Romance* has now been confirmed: see Ryholt 1998a and 2002.

⁷⁶ Well covered in Stoneman 2008 and 2012. ⁷⁷ Hägg and Utas 2003.

⁷⁸ Kurke 2011. ⁷⁹ Full bibliography at n. 41 of Avlamis' chapter.

⁸⁰ Luzzato 1992 and 1994 push the evidence as hard as it will go. I have not seen Konstantakos 2008, which appears to be the definitive survey.

certainly travelled via other routes, too. Art is one possibility, although there is in fact surprisingly little evidence for the depiction of 'fictional' characters (aside from the famous Metiochus and Parthenope mosaics of Antioch-on-the-Orontes and Zeugma).⁸¹ Mime and pantomime, which have benefited from such a burst of enthusiasm in recent years, are another; Webb's chapter in this volume tracks the close relationship between the novelistic and the mimic, demonstrating in particular the huge reach that such performance cultures enjoyed. In sixth-century Syria, for example, mimes could still be found. Finally, there is of course oral story-telling, the great uncharted ocean of ancient narrative. Kim's chapter explores both the opportunities and risks in reconstructing an oral story world, and the conceptual challenges raised by the concept of 'oral novels'.

The book closes, fittingly enough, with a chapter on Pierre-Daniel Huet, whose *Lettre-traité sur l'origine des romans* not only invigorated the modern study of the ancient novel, but also offered a far more multicultural picture of novelistic production in antiquity than most classicists would sanction. Huet belongs in the 'transmission' section because he was the modern age's first theorist of the cross-cultural transfer of novelistic narrative. Yet Huet, as Vasunia's powerful but careful analysis shows, was not a multiculturalist in any sense that we would understand now: his account was fundamentally shaped by the acquisitive colonial dynamics of seventeenth-century France. Vasunia's conclusions offer a valuable lesson to all who practise literary history: all intellectual models, no matter how revolutionary, are consigned to be read as paradigmatic of their own social context.

This is, of course, equally true of the present volume, which will no doubt strike some readers as just as politically embedded as the accounts of Huet, Rohde *et al.* This is no doubt true enough, but there are two crucial reasons to persist. First, our evidence base has expanded hugely over the last 100 years, partly because of papyri and partly because disciplinary walls within the academy have been breached. One could scarcely find a richer example of this than Ryholt's chapter in this volume, based on his first-hand experience with the Papyrus Carlsberg Collection at Copenhagen. A wealth of new evidence clearly brings with it exciting new opportunities. The second reason is more abstract. *No* literary history can be ideologically neutral, and that includes our existing, *paideia*-based accounts of the Greek novels. If such accounts seem commonsensical and uncontroversial to any

⁸¹ Reproductions at e.g. Hägg 1983: 19–23. Hägg also includes among his illustrations a mosaic of Ninus and Semiramis, which may (but need not) point towards the novelistic version (note, too, the reliefs on the basilica at Aphrodisias, with Yildirim 2004). His suggestion at 93–5 that Greek novelistic texts may have been illustrated (to aid inexperienced readers) has not convinced many.

of us, that is all the more reason for alarm: it means they have been naturalised to the point where their ideology is invisible. The choice is between sticking with outmoded models forged in the aristocratic-nationalist *mentalité* of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century philology, and exploring new possibilities. It is in that spirit of exploration that the present volume was conceived.

PART I

Egyptians

CHAPTER 2

Greek fiction and Egyptian fiction *Are they related and, if so, how?*

Ian Rutherford

In Heliodorus' *Aethiopica*, Calasiris famously makes the claim that Homer himself was an Egyptian, born in Egyptian Thebes, the son of the god Hermes who slept with his mother when she was performing an incubation in his temple, something that can be seen in a hidden allusion (*ainigma*) contained in the Homeric poems about the nature of the gods which corresponds to the way Egyptians designed divine statues.¹ By contrast, the hypothesis that the genre of romance itself had an Egyptian origin had to wait until the twentieth century, and one of the main things that led to it was new discoveries about Egyptian literature, beginning in the nineteenth century and continuing into the twentieth, which turned out to have had a rich tradition of narrative prose in Egyptian, dating back at least as far as the Middle Kingdom (early second millennium BCE). It also became clear that at least one Egyptian narrative text had been translated or adapted into Greek.

The modest aim of this paper is to survey the evidence for the Egyptian origin of the Romance, and modern investigation of the subject, both before and after John Barns' seminal paper of 1956. By way of providing background, I begin with brief overviews of Egyptian literature and the relationship to Greek literature, before moving on to discuss modern theories about the Egyptian origin of the novel, both up to the mid-twentieth century and more recently.

Egyptian literature

Egyptian textual culture was already well developed in the third millennium BCE, before the Greek speakers on most reconstructions reached Greece. And many early Egyptian texts merit the designation 'literary', whether we

¹ 3.12.2.

define 'literature' in terms of formal factors (such as intertextuality), function (or the absence of it) or 'cultural significance'.² Early genres include short autobiographies, moral didactic literature (the so-called 'Instructions' *-sb3yt*) and esoteric ritual texts, especially ones connected with the afterlife, the so-called 'Pyramid Texts'. We also have prayers, hymns and royal propaganda of various sorts. There is also a rich tradition of narrative texts in prose (see below). In the earlier period, the language is classical Egyptian, written in the esoteric hieroglyphic or hieratic scripts which can hardly have been accessible to anyone other than professional scribes.³

By the sixth century BCE, when the Saite pharaohs began to establish closer diplomatic and economic ties to Greece, Egyptian literature looks a little different, though many of the fundamentals are the same. The classical Egyptian language is still used for monumental inscriptions, and for some religious texts, but the productive medium is now Demotic Egyptian, also the spoken language, written in a new and equally esoteric script, probably invented around seventh century BCE. The Demotic phase of Egyptian literature lasted for almost a millennium, until Coptic emerged in the late third century. Its story over this period was one of decline: in the Ptolemaic period Demotic language and script were still used for administration, alongside Greek, but from the Roman period, it mostly gave up that role, and became confined to recording literature and religious texts. Paradoxically, the Roman period is when a large number of Demotic literary manuscripts date from, as scribes in temples persevered in their mission to preserve the ancient traditions.

The understanding of Demotic Egyptian literature has seen exponential growth in recent years. After decades of neglect, many more of the Demotic texts in the great collections of Copenhagen and Vienna are now being published by a new generation of younger scholars, and older, neglected texts are being reappraised. We now have several excellent guides to the subject, and a new anthology of German translations by Joachim Quack and Friedhelm Hoffmann.⁴ The overall range of genres is similar to that of earlier Egyptian literature. Demotic literature includes poetry and ritual drama, oracles, 'Instruction' texts (such as the *Book of Onksheshonqî*) and esoteric religious teachings, such as the recently published *Book of Thoth*, a complex collection of mystic doctrines arranged in the form of

² Formal: Loprieno 1996a; function: Assmann 1974; cultural: Assmann 1996.

³ General guides to Egyptian religion: Enmarch 2010; Moers 2010; papers in Loprieno 1996a; translations: Lichtheim 1973; Simpson 2003.

⁴ Guides to Demotic literature: Quack 2009, Ryholt 2010.

dialogues between a master and student.⁵ There are also what might be called ‘subliterary’ textual genres, such as a law-code, and a guide to ritual practice in temples for priests, the so-called *Book of the Temple*, currently being edited by Joachim Quack.⁶

Narrative literature was an important part of Egyptian literature from early on. As Gustave Lefebvre put it in 1949:

Les contes n'étaient en Grèce qu'un divertissement pour enfants. En Egypte, au contraire, ils étaient, à bon droit, considérés comme des oeuvres littéraires, dignes de servir d'exercices de lecture et de calligraphie aux jeunes gens se destinant au métier de scribe; en fait, ils constituent une des sections les plus importantes de la littérature égyptienne.⁷

Already in the Middle Kingdom (early second millennium BCE) we find short prose narratives: the story of *Sinuhe*, and the *Tale of the Shipwrecked Sailor*, which show considerable literary sophistication, and arguably deserve to be considered ‘fiction’ in a more or less modern sense.⁸ There are also more fantastic narratives, such as the exotic *Tale of the Two Brothers*, the hero of which triumphs in the end after a series of adventures that includes cutting out his own heart, changing into a bull and being twice reborn, first as a tree and then as a baby-prince.⁹ Some of these stories involve magicians and magic, such as the sequence of stories that survives in Papyrus Westcar.¹⁰ There are also official narratives attributed to pharaoh, such as celebrations of military victories (to someone used to Greco-Roman literary forms these may resemble ‘epic’).¹¹ A specifically Egyptian narrative genre is the so-called *Königsnovelle*, a collective term for monumental texts which present the pharaoh as having performed some major accomplishment, sometimes after having overcome considerable adversity.¹²

Anthropologists have taught us to think of mythology as a primary mode of thought among early peoples, but it is notable that in Egyptian literature continuous mythological narratives are surprisingly few. Exceptions include the action-packed *Contendings of Horus and Seth*, as well as the *Myth of the Heavenly Cow*, inscribed on several Theban tombs, which includes an account of the transition from a sort of Golden Age to the present which

⁵ Jasnow and Zauzich in 2005. ⁶ Quack 2003.

⁷ Lefebvre 1949: vii; cf. Reymond 1983: 46: ‘To the ancient Egyptians this (narrative literature) was obviously their national genre.’

⁸ *Sinuhe*: Lichtheim 1973: vol. 1, 222–33; *Shipwrecked Sailor*: Lichtheim 1973: vol. 1, 211–15; in general: Moers 2001.

⁹ Lichtheim 1973: vol. 11, 203–11. Hollis 1990. ¹⁰ Lichtheim 1973: vol. 1, 215–22.

¹¹ E.g. the Kadesh Battle Inscriptions of Ramses II: Lichtheim 1973: vol. 11, 57–72.

¹² Loprieno 1996c.

anticipates Hesiod by many centuries.¹³ The most important of all Egyptian myths, the Osiris saga, survives in no continuous Egyptian version, and (strangely enough) is best preserved in Plutarch's Greek. Although some Egyptologists have argued that myth itself develops fairly late in Egyptian terms, that is, in the New Kingdom, a better explanation must be that myths existed, but were not committed to writing.¹⁴

In the Demotic period, too, narrative was a productive genre, and two main subtypes can be distinguished:¹⁵ first, stories about magicians, particularly Setne Khaemwas, and second, quasi-historical stories concerned with war and heroic endeavour, particularly a cycle centred round the figure of the warrior Inaros and his descendants. In the latter cycle, one narrative is concerned with the disputed inheritance of the benefice at Thebes (*The Contest for the Benefice of Amun*; the titles are modern), another with the armour of Inaros himself (*The Struggle for the Weapons of Inaros*). In a third (*Egyptians and Amazons*), an Egyptian ruler fights and then falls in love with a warrior-queen called Serpot. A number of fragmentary narratives, most of them still unpublished, are concerned with conflict between Egypt and peoples of the East, in a way reminiscent of the theme of conflict between East and West familiar from Greek sources (the Greeks themselves seem never to figure in these Egyptian narratives).¹⁶ One example, *Djoser and Imhotep*, describes a war waged between Egypt and Assyria, one of whose motivations was to 'retrieve the forty-two body-parts' of Osiris.¹⁷

Other Demotic narratives were concerned with myth, such as the story of the goddess Tefnut, also called the Eye of Re or of the Sun, who gets angry and withdraws from Egypt to Nubia, whereupon the gods send Thoth to bring her back.¹⁸ Thoth accomplishes his mission by telling her a sequence of animal fables, which could be seen as having a broader didactic function. During the whole narrative, Thoth has the form of a baboon, while Tefnut is a cat. Another recently published Demotic narrative recounts the creation of the world from a primeval ocean.¹⁹ Other mythological manuals surviving from this period are in classical Egyptian.²⁰

The earliest fragments of papyri with Demotic narratives seem to date from the fourth century BCE. Oblique evidence for the existence of similar

¹³ *Horus and Seth*: Lichtheim 1973: vol. 1, 214–23; *Heavenly Cow*: Hornung 1982.

¹⁴ New Kingdom: Assmann 1977; later: Baines 1991. ¹⁵ For a recent study, see F. Hoffmann 2009.

¹⁶ Possible exception: Quack 2005b: 65 = Quack 2009: 77. On the Setne Khaemwas stories, see Stephens, this volume; on the Inaros Cycle, see Ryholt, this volume.

¹⁷ Ryholt 2004a. ¹⁸ See West, this volume, with bibliography.

¹⁹ Smith 2002. ²⁰ Ryholt 2010: 725–8.

texts in the fifth century comes in the form of two Aramaic texts that could be translations from Demotic. One of them is part of the story of the magician Hor, son of Punesh, the other seems to be part of the Inaros story.²¹ It seems possible that in the fifth century, and perhaps also in the sixth or even earlier, such narratives circulated primarily in oral form, and did not begin to be written down until later.

The formative period for these stories may thus have been that of the Persian occupation and before it that of the Saite Dynasty, when the Assyrian invasion still resonated in the Egyptian collective memory. It may thus be seen as to some extent a literature of resistance, anticipating analogous trends that can be found in the Egyptian culture of the Hellenistic period.²²

Interaction between Greek and Egyptian literature

The last few decades have not only increased our knowledge of Egyptian literature, but also our understanding of the relation between it and Greek literature. In the Hellenistic and Roman periods, written translations and adaptations from Demotic Egyptian to Greek seem to be common. They may even go back as far as Eudoxus of Cnidus in the fourth century, if his *Dialogues of the Dogs* was a translation,²³ and less formal translating into Greek of Egyptian texts or oral traditions via interpreters may have been happening for much longer than that, if, for example, Herodotus' account of Egypt makes use of Egyptian sources. The contexts of translation in the Hellenistic and Roman periods would probably have been mainly bilingual temple libraries.²⁴ It goes without saying that there was a great deal of Greek-Egyptian bilingualism in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt, even if the languages remain more or less uninfluenced by one another, at least in their written form.²⁵

The best known example of a translated narrative is the *Myth of the Sun's Eye*, known in a Demotic version, or rather versions, the first of them published by Spiegelberg in 1917, and a slightly aberrant Greek version, published by Reitzenstein in 1923, both texts dating from the Roman period.²⁶ Other narratives known to be translated are the *Dream of Nectanebo* (see later) and, probably, the Sesostris story. Another genre that probably existed in both Greek and Egyptian versions as well was oracular literature: the famous ultra-nationalist 'Oracle of the Potter', for example,

²¹ Hor, son of Punesh: Porten 2004; Inaros: Holm 2007; Quack 2009: 6, 22–3; Dalley 2001: 154–5.

²² On this, Lloyd 1982. ²³ Diogenes Laertius 8.89; von Bissing 1949; Griffiths 1965.

²⁴ Ryholt 2005b. ²⁵ Fewster 2002. ²⁶ West, this volume.

exists only in Greek, but everything about it suggests that it is translated from a Demotic Egyptian original, and similar texts exist in Demotic, such as the more recently published 'Oracle of the Lamb'.²⁷ Subliterary texts were translated as well, such as the 'Book of the Temple'.

Also partly a translation, but of a different type, is *Aegyptiaca* by the Egyptian priest Manetho of Sebennytus, which is a sort of history of Egypt, and the first reliable one in Greek. But as far as we can make out, its structure is a fusion of Egyptian (the annalistic structure and the form of the narratives, which may have the form of the traditional Egyptian *Königsnovelle*) and Greek (the overall idea of putting it all together to make a comprehensive history).²⁸ Another genre where we might want to talk about loose adaptation rather than translation is that of the so-called 'Isis Aretalogies', in which Isis praises her own powers, attested in various inscriptions in the Aegean in the later Hellenistic and Roman periods. Twenty years ago, the fashion was to look for development within Greek literature, but more recently, scholars have found detailed lexical parallels with the Demotic texts, and it may be that the Greek texts should be seen as a fusion of Egyptian and Greek hymnographic motifs.²⁹

At the same time, there were also suggestions that influence might have happened in the other direction. In his monumental publication of two texts of the Inaros-Cycle (then still known as the 'Petubastis-Cycle') in 1910, Spiegelberg suggested that there might have been influence on it from Homer, perhaps as early as the sixth century BCE, and via Naukratis, and these remarks were expanded by Roeder in a German translation of Egyptian narratives in 1927;³⁰ Roeder pointed in particular to the parallel between the armour of Inaros, fought over by two parties of epigones, and the armour of Achilles in the Greek tradition. In 1950 Schwartz drew attention to a sort of 'catalogue of ships' within the *Armour of Inaros*, which he suggested was unmotivated in the Egyptian context, and might be derived from the Homeric model. In 1956 Aksel Volten drew attention to a then unpublished text concerning an Egyptian king, the son of Inaros, and a warrior woman, Serpot, who seem to fall in love on the battle field, and subsequently to engage in a joint campaign against India, and suggested influence from the Greek myth of Achilles and Penthesileia, presumably mediated through the *Aithiopis*. Demoticists have been sharply divided

²⁷ *Oracle of the Potter*: Koenen 1968; *Oracle of the Lamb*: Simpson 2003.

²⁸ See Dillery 1999a; for Manetho, see Verbrugghe and Wickersham 1996 and Dillery, this volume.

²⁹ Greek development: Fowden 1986, Henrichs 1984; Demotic elements: Kockelmann 2008, Stadler 2009; Quack 2003.

³⁰ Roeder 1927.

over whether or not these apparent parallels should be explained as Greek influence and, if so, what the Greek models are; Günther Vittmann, for example, has argued for different Greek models in the case of the Serpot narrative, including that of Alexander's Dionysiac campaign in India.³¹

Greek influence has been detected in other genres of narrative as well. The Second Setne narrative contains a sort of *katabasis* where some of the dead are represented as plaiting ropes, which are then consumed by donkeys. This is a *prima facie* parallel to a detail in the painting 'Nekuia' by the Greek artist Polygnotus, as described by Pausanias 10.29.2, and since this motif seems anomalous in an Egyptian context, many scholars have posited this specific Greek model.³² In 1927 Isidore Lévy argued for influence from the Greek *Life of Pythagoras*, which had a *katabasis* scene. Other scholars, such as Hoffmann, argue that the motif is old in Egypt and might be the source for the Greek tradition. To take a different example, Ryholt has recently suggested that the narrative of *Djoser and Imhotep* (see above) might be based on the Greek genre of quasi-fictional biography.³³

As well as translation, adaptation or influence in one direction or the other, we might also consider the possibility of parallel development between the traditions, arising from multifaceted and long-term influence between the two literary and textual cultures. This is the process suggested for the Greek and Demotic magical papyri by Jacco Dieleman, who sees some of the Egyptian magical spells as translations from Greek ones which are themselves translations from orally transmitted Egyptian ones.³⁴ Recent work on aretalogies of Isis and Egyptian hymns also suggests that there is influence in both directions.³⁵ Another case is the Greek Hermetic corpus and the Demotic 'Book of Thoth', recently published by Jasnow and Zauzich and presented by them as a pendant to the *Hermetica*.³⁶ The relationship between the Greek and Egyptian texts is not close, and the most the Greek can be said to have borrowed from the Egyptian is the idea of a dialogue between a deity and a disciple. However, the Egyptian may also have borrowed some things from the Greek, such as the central word 'lover of knowledge' (*mr-rh*) which seems to be a calque.³⁷

³¹ Vittmann 1998; Thissen 1999 argued in favour of Homeric influence, Hoffmann 1996 has argued against; Quack 2005a presents a more considered view.

³² This was already noticed by Maspero. Hoffmann 1994 has full references.

³³ Ryholt 2009a: 312–13. Ryholt 2009b: 313 has recently noted that in a fragment from a narrative about Imhotep, the magician, the Greek word αἰνιγμα seems to occur in transliteration (cf. the use of that word in Heliodorus, *Aith.* 3.12.2, cited at the start).

³⁴ Dieleman 2005. ³⁵ Stadler 2009.

³⁶ Jasnow and Zauzich 2005. ³⁷ Jasnow and Zauzich 2005: 13.

Given the range of possibilities, it is often impossible to figure out how Greek and Egyptian are related. Take, for example, Herodotus' story of Pheros (2.111), the Egyptian pharaoh who went blind and was told by an oracle that he would be cured if he bathed his eyes in the urine of a woman who had not slept with any man except her husband. After trying a large number of women, he eventually found a virtuous one, and subsequently had all the unfaithful ones burned to death. An Egyptian equivalent to that story was published in 2005, one of a sequence of short narratives illustrating the virtues and vices of women told by two baboons in one of the narratives associated with the priest Petese.³⁸ It tells how a pharaoh (unnamed) went blind and dreamt that he was to cure himself by washing his eyes with the tears of a virtuous woman, that is, a woman who had not had intercourse outside marriage. Eventually, he found a woman with the right sort of tears, and recovered his sight. The stories are not identical, but they are similar enough that it makes sense to posit a connection: but what? In the *editio princeps* Ryholt suggested that the Egyptian story might have been the source for Herodotus, but we cannot rule out the possibility that Herodotus has influenced the Egyptians, especially since the Petese text dates from the Roman period.³⁹

The Greek novel and Egypt

The majority of the Egyptian narrative texts became known in the second half of the nineteenth century, though much of the Demotic material is still in the process of being published. Access to the material was made easier by Gaston Maspero's collection, which appeared in French in several editions from 1882, and in English translation in 1915.⁴⁰ Questions naturally began to arise about the relationship between this material and Greek literature. There was speculation that the Homeric *Odyssey* might have been influenced by Egyptian travel narratives, such as Sinuhe, for example.⁴¹

As far as the relation between Egyptian narrative texts and the Greek Romance are concerned, there were two schools of thought in the early twentieth century. The first has to do with religion, and its classic statement

³⁸ *P. Petese* II, Ryholt 2005: 20.

³⁹ Ryholt 2005: 17, 'the Blinding of Pharaoh was heard and translated into Greek by Herodotus in the mid 5th century BCE'. N.B. some date the Petese text earlier.

⁴⁰ Early evidence, e.g. Mannhardt 1859.

⁴¹ For example, some have compared Homer to the Middle Kingdom 'Tale of the Ship-Wrecked Sailor': Bérard 1931: 100–2; Gilbert 1939: 55–6; see Germain 1954: 299–306; J. B. Hainsworth, in Heubeck, West, Hainsworth, Russo, Fernández-Galliano 1988–1992: vol. 1, 290.

is by Karl Kerényi in his *Die griechisch-orientalische Romanliteratur* (1927). *Romanliteratur* is a brilliant, if problematic, book that argues two main theses about the Greco-Roman novels: first, that they are Isiac religious texts, written by authors who are essentially *aretalogoi*, so much so that they ought to be read 'with the eyes of an Isiac initiate' (cf. p. 229); and, second, that the genre can be said to have originated in Isiac religious ideology; he takes the earliest instance of the genre to be the *Eselroman* which lies behind Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*. Kerényi's work shows some influence from Richard Reitzenstein, both his edition of the Story of the Sun's Eye, which is cited several times,⁴² and his work on aretalogies.⁴³ Besides the main argument, Kerényi also did remarkable work in tracking down Egyptian colouring in the romances,⁴⁴ and he argued convincingly for Egypt as the geographic centre of the novels, which, in his view, make up a 'semi-circle' based on Egypt.⁴⁵

Romanliteratur did not receive a favourable reception. As far as his theory of origins is concerned, while most scholars these days agree that Apuleius exploits the symbolism of the ass as a symbol of Seth, the adversary of Isis and Osiris in Egyptian mythology,⁴⁶ it seems to be a major difficulty for Kerényi's thesis that there is no sign of Isiac symbolism in the pseudo-Lucianic *Onos*, which is often taken to be Apuleius' model, or at least only one step removed from it. Arthur Darby Nock pointed this out in his review of Kerényi's book, and also observed that if the romances had been intended to be read as religious narratives, we would expect the symbolism to be more obvious.

The demise of Kerényi's thesis was only apparent, however, and it was revived thirty-five years later in a slightly different form by the great German epigrapher Reinhold Merkelbach in *Roman und Mysterium in der Antike* (1962). Merkelbach argued that the references to Isis and other mystery cults in the romances were indeed present, but were not supposed to be

⁴² Kerényi 1927.

⁴³ Reitzenstein 1906; unlike Reitzenstein 1906: 93–9, Kerényi 1927: 204–5 thought the novel was aretalogy. On aretalogy, Ruiz Montero 1996: 79, Beck 1996: 13, with references cited there. The relationship between Reitzenstein and Kerényi is clarified by Henrichs 2006: 63–6.

⁴⁴ For example, Kerényi 1927: 240, 253–5 on the 'love in a temple' motif, found in both one of the Setne narratives and Heliodorus' *Aethiopica* 2.25. I should have cited this in Rutherford 1997. David Frankfurter had discussed the image of the Egyptian priest in Greek texts, e.g. Frankfurter 2000: 168–71.

⁴⁵ Kerényi 1927: 44.

⁴⁶ Kerényi 1927: 186 etc., 230; Winkler 1985: 182; cf. Merkelbach 1962: 1. See above. Some have thought a lost Egyptian tale to be behind this, and a Demotic dramatic papyrus recently published in which an ass representing Seth seems to have been abused and attacked provides a sort of parallel: Gaudard 2005: 159.

obvious, because they were part of a secret code that made sense only to those who had undergone initiation. Like Kerényi, he placed a great deal of emphasis on Apuleius, particularly the Cupid and Psyche episode. Many of the individual arguments that Merkelbach makes seem unconvincing; for example, while the Cupid and Psyche myth does seem to be given an Egyptian spin in some syncretic iconography, Apuleius' version seems striking for the absence of Isiac material. But Merkelbach's general point is precisely that the meaning of the narrative is esoteric, which makes his thesis very difficult to falsify.⁴⁷

The most successful critique of Kerényi and Merkelbach known to me is that by Isolde Stark, in her study of religious elements in the novel.⁴⁸ At the heart of the theory, she sees a refusal to accept that the romances are essentially trivial in theme, and the tendency to see them as religious scripts in her view arises from a mistaken desire to assimilate them to other forms of ancient literature which draw on myth and religion.⁴⁹ Kerényi and Merkelbach are right to observe that the typical plot of a romance, with separation and tribulation followed by salvation and reunion may indeed be similar in broad outline to myths and narratives that are found in mystery religions that dramatise the salvation of initiants or the actions of gods which supply the *historiola*. But this does not prove that a romance is a mystery text; merely that salvation from tribulation is a universal pattern of human experience, of which both authors of prose fiction and creators of religious cults and myths take advantage.

The second school is represented by John Barns' celebrated paper on the relation between the Greek Romance and Egyptian narrative fiction. The paper was given at the 1955 Vienna Papyrological Congress, and appeared in the *Akten* of the Congress the next year. In fact, it was not the only paper on the relation between Greek and Egyptian literature in that volume: it also contained one by the Danish Egyptologist Aksel Volten exploring the Greek background of the Inaros Cycle, summing up the findings of some recently published papers, and drawing on his knowledge of yet unpublished texts (including *Egyptians and Amazons*, of which he was to publish the *editio princeps* in 1962).⁵⁰

Barns came at the problem with the unique perspective of one who had held university research and teaching positions in both papyrology (which means primarily the study of Greek texts) and Egyptology. Three years

⁴⁷ Beck 1996 is a good guide to the issue.

⁴⁸ Stark 1989: 145–9; I owe the reference to Beck 1996.

⁴⁹ Stark 1989: 149, Merkelbach 1962: 'Vorwort'.

⁵⁰ Volten 1956, referring to Stricker 1954; Schwartz 1950.

before the Vienna conference in 1952 he had published an edition of the 'Story of Sinuhe', preserved on an *ostrakon* in the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford. One thing to observe about the 1956 paper is that Barns almost entirely ignores Kerényi; he cites him only once (on p. 55, for the thesis that Egypt is the geographical centre in the world of the novel), but is silent about his argument for a relationship between the romances and Isiac cult, nor does he mention aretalogy. The reason for this cannot have been that Barns lacked religious convictions (he took Holy Orders the very year the paper appeared, and 'was unswervingly orthodox in his beliefs').⁵¹ It is more likely that he shared Nock's doubts about the cogency of the parallels.

Instead, Barns shifts the focus of the argument onto themes and the evidence of translation. The themes he discusses are i. travel; ii. love; iii. 'magical' elements (briefly) and iv. the historicity of the plots. Of these, the second is the surprise because it is usually overlooked. Barns pointed to various then unpublished texts, such as the Pedikhons and Serpot episode of *Egyptians and Amazons* (see above on Volten), but his prize example was a narrative concerning Bes, from the second century CE, which seems to have been part of the Inaros Cycle (which is a reason for thinking it might be relatively early). The text has still not been published in full, but a translation of part of it appears in Quack and Hoffmann's recent anthology.⁵² The plot is a classic love-triangle: Bes (male) is best friends with Haryothes (male), who is in love with Tasis (female). Tasis is abducted by the wicked suitor Pulemis. Bes and Haryothes retrieve her, defeating an army in the process. However, Bes falls in love with Tasis himself, and propositions her. Tasis asks him how he can sleep with her while Haryothes sleeps nearby. So Bes kills Haryothes. Tasis is appalled, but tells Bes she will only sleep with him if it is in Haryothes' grave. So Bes and Tasis dig a grave and bury him. Whereupon Tasis goes down into the grave and kills herself with Bes' spear. Isis then appears, and punishes Bes with leprosy. Subsequently he goes to Nubia, and is killed by Inaros. Hellenists will be reminded of cases in the Greek novel where someone considers suicide after what they believe is the death of their beloved. This, however, is different from anything in the Greek novel because the lovers actually die. It is also much shorter, a minor narrative within the back story of the campaigns of Inaros, whereas, in the Greek novel, the love story is the main thing, and the military events are subsidiary. It should also be observed that since the

⁵¹ Davies 1974 (obituary).

⁵² Hoffmann and Quack 2007: 55–9; according to 55 n. 65 there is an edition of the text forthcoming from Hoffmann.

only extant manuscript of the text is so late, influence from Greek literature cannot be ruled out.

Barns also pointed to evidence for translation from Egyptian to Greek. In addition to Tefnut, he mentions the *Dream of Nectanebo*, the latter the story of how the very last Egyptian pharaoh, Nectanebo II, has a dream that he must restore the temple of an obscure Egyptian deity, Onuris, and for this purpose engages the services of a hieroglyph cutter called Petese, who is about to begin his task when he falls in love with a beautiful woman. The significance of this is so much the greater because the *Alexander Romance* begins with the story of Nectanebo, and how he leaves Egypt and fathers Alexander while resident in Macedonia, disguised as a wandering magician. The Greek version of this had been known for a century, and in fact Demotic versions were soon to appear, though Barns seems not to have known that.⁵³ Barns also mentions a Michigan papyrus in which a character boasts of having control over the forces of nature,⁵⁴ and a fragment of the *Sesostris Romance* (*P.Oxy.* 1826). He acknowledged that in some cases the influence was from Greek literature to Egyptian.⁵⁵

He sums up his argument (my letters):

We see, then, that a) Egypt had a tradition of prose literature which remained unchanged for two thousand years; that b) the themes of Greek fiction, which was such a late development as to suggest that it was an importation, can be paralleled in contemporary and earlier Egyptian; that c) the first romance in the Greek language (i.e. the *Alexander Romance* and the *Dream of Nectanebo*) is a translation from Egyptian; and that d) other Egyptian stories were translated into Greek.

He concludes: 'Greek prose fiction owes its origin at least in part to Egypt', but is careful to point out that most of the extant novels are so Hellenised they show little sign of their origins, and that other oriental cultures may have contributed as well.

The most solid part of this argument is surely the point about the *Dream of Nectanebo* (c). If we agree that this is a translation from the Egyptian, and that its Greek reception, both in the *Dream of Nectanebo* itself and in the *Alexander Romance*, is close to the Greek romance in general, then in principle we must allow the possibility that other features of the Egyptian narratives may have passed over from Egyptian to Greek narratives as well.

⁵³ For the Demotic versions, Ryholt 1998a and Ryholt 2002. For more on the Nectanebo story, see Stephens, this volume.

⁵⁴ *P.Mich.inv.* 5; Stephens and Winkler 1995: 173–8.

⁵⁵ Cf. also Barns 1973: 14: 'The debt was reciprocal; some late Demotic romances show unmistakable Greek influence.'

Having said that, this is still far short of an argument for an Egyptian origin of the novel, and it is clear that Barns was not claiming that.

Where we are now . . .

In the almost six decades since Barns's paper, and the five decades since Merkelbach's monograph, how has the argument moved on? Probably the most crucial development has been Ryholt's publication of the Demotic versions of the Nectanebo story,⁵⁶ which for the first time gave us a concrete link to the *Alexander Romance*, and confirmed the hypotheses of earlier scholars, including Barns. Since then, John Dillery and Richard Jasnow have both argued that other parts of the *Alexander Romance* show traces of Egyptian influence.⁵⁷

A second respect in which Barns got it right was the Sesostriis narrative, which is also linked to the *Alexander Romance*, in which Sesostriis is presented as a sort of model for Alexander. Additional fragments of the Greek version in 1962 (*P. Oxy.* 2466) and 1980 (*P. Oxy.* 3319), and small fragments of what looks like a Demotic version of a Sesostriis narrative were published by Ghislaine Widmer in 2005. It is surely more likely than not that these are part of an authentic Egyptian tradition about Sesostriis, an early version of which was known to Herodotus. On the other hand, the question of the relationship between the Greek and Egyptian versions is even harder than usual to assess in this case, since so little of either survives. It would, for example, be interesting to know whether Sesostriis' love interest, which is manifest in the Greek fragments, was already there in the Egyptian.⁵⁸

On the other hand, the new Egyptian texts published in the last five decades do not contain anything that looks like the precursor of a *bona fide* Greek romance. The Bes narrative that Barns discussed has still not been published in full. The most important publication in the last few decades is a fragmentary papyrus from Saqqara near Memphis.⁵⁹ The date is early Ptolemaic: important, because it makes it harder to argue that this might have been influenced by Greek models. The theme is neither heroic myth nor magic, but, as Quack puts it, 'court-intrigues, betrayal, murder, executions, love and detective abilities'.⁶⁰ The story seems to have concerned a woman, Nanoufesakhme, who hides in the Memphite necropolis after her husband Djedseshep is killed; she is discovered and rescued by a certain

⁵⁶ Ryholt 2002. ⁵⁷ Jasnow 1997 and Dillery 2004.

⁵⁸ On the Sesostriis Romance, see Lloyd 1982. See Stephens and Winkler 1995: 246–66 and bibliography, 502.

⁵⁹ Smith and Tait 1983. ⁶⁰ Quack 2005b: 75.

Harmakhrou. Apparently another character, the prophet of Horus and Lord of Letopolis, is executed for the murder. Other characters are priests and scribes and the pharaoh. The action straddles Memphis, Wenkhem to the north and Thebes. The length of the narrative seems to have been over 500 long lines arranged in 16 columns; no column is preserved complete. Something of the flavour of the text is shown by an episode recorded in col. 9 where a man and a girl, perhaps pretending to be a servant, seem to be on the run. Notice in particular line 21: “Why are you weeping?” She said to him “I am weeping because I have never once been apart from you, and today you are parting from me . . .” Aspects of this remind one in a very general way of the Greek romance: we have a husband and wife, presumably formerly in love, the husband dead, and persecution by someone else, a wicked priest, who in Greek terms could easily be recast as a magician. Was he the distant ancestor of Paapis in the *Wonders beyond Thule*? Having said that, there are also differences, most of all the fact that the death of the husband seems to be real and not apparent.

On the Greek side also, there are no decisive new texts. The closest we come is the Tinouphis fragment (1981), but that tells us nothing more than that there was a Greek narrative in which one character was the *prophetes* Tinouphis.⁶¹

Essentially, then, the hypothesis that the Greek romance is somehow derived from Egyptian literature has not moved on since Barns 1956, except that we now know more about the Demotic versions of Nectanebo and Sesostris, which has implications for the *Alexander Romance*.

What about the thesis that the Greek romance adopts themes or motifs from Isiac religion? Although neither Kerényi nor Merkelbach has many disciples today, the idea of some influence from Egyptian culture or religion is perfectly plausible. One way of formulating the thesis would be to say that the dissemination of Isiac cult in the Mediterranean from the third century BCE brings with it certain narrative patterns. One obvious narrative pattern is that underlying the ‘aretalogy’, that is, ‘an oppressed person is saved by a deity, especially Isis or Sarapis, and praises the power or beneficence of the deity/ies’. We have already seen that for Kerényi the aretalogy is related to the Greek romance, and it is worth noticing that Egyptian texts exist with a similar shape, for example a short narrative published by Hoffmann and Quack in their anthology.⁶² Another relevant narrative pattern could be the idea of a strong female character (Isis) assisting and accompanying a strong

⁶¹ Stephens and Winkler 1995: 400–8.

⁶² Hoffmann and Quack 2007: 178–9. In other narratives, there is punishment by Isis, e.g., *P. Saqqara* 2 and the Bes narrative.

male character (Osiris), which has recently been traced in both Demotic fiction and Greek fiction by the American Egyptologist Steve Vinson.⁶³ However, such general parallels, even if they are regarded as convincing, do not constitute grounds for believing that the Greek romance derives from an Egyptian model, but at most the emergence of a common network of expectations about how the world works, which independently shapes narratives in the two traditions.

Finally, of the various new developments of the last half century, one of the most important has been an increased awareness that Greek and Egyptian literatures of the Greco-Roman period are linked in many ways, not only by virtue of many influences and borrowings that go in either direction, but also in so far as they both reflect cultural expectations shared by educated elites both in Egypt and in the broader Greco-Roman world. For this reason, the existence of isolated parallels, such as the girl's suicide in the Bes narrative, can at most suggest that there is some sort of link in the background, but not what sort it was, or in what direction it happened. We can only hope that the publication of more Demotic material, or the discovery of new texts in either language, may clarify the situation to some extent.⁶⁴

⁶³ Vinson (forthcoming); on the pattern in general, see Koenen 1983.

⁶⁴ Compare the optimistic assessment of Quack 2009: 53, who says: 'Kontakte der beiden Kulture in diesem Bereich sind wahrscheinlich. In welche Richtung allerdings die Einflüsse genau gegangen sind bzw. ob veränderter Lesergeschmack zu konvergenten Entwicklungen geführt hat, wird sich erst nach einer vollständigen Vorlage der demotischen Fragmente klären lassen, wobei auch Chronologiefragen noch genauerer Klärung bedürfen.'

CHAPTER 3

Manetho

John Dillery

It is both a testament to the importance of the work, but also a commentary on the poor state of our understanding of non-Greek narratives written in Greek in the Early Hellenistic Period, that Martin Braun's *History and Romance in Graeco-Oriental Literature* (1938) remains probably the most acute analysis of Manetho and Berossus. Braun argued that there was 'history' produced by Hellenophone native elite priests, and 'romance' that was produced by a lower 'stratum' that articulated a more 'popular' view of the past and its relevance to the Greco-Macedonian present, directed more at a domestic audience.¹ I believe that Braun is crucially wrong in this division: romance and history are combined in Manetho, and his audience is indeed both 'foreign' and 'domestic', but the 'domestic' audience is made of his peers – namely other elite Egyptian priests.²

I begin by looking closely at Manetho's most 'Hellenised' or 'Hellenising' narrative, namely the Sethos and Harmais story (Jos. *Ap.* 1.98–102 = *FGrH* 609F9, Waddell 1940: F50).³ I demonstrate that not only do we see individual Greek words and phrases artfully deployed, but also large-scale narrative devices familiar from Herodotus and other Greek historical authors; in particular, the motif of the ruler and his *megalophrosune*. In the second half of the paper, I turn to the two larger Hyksos narratives of Manetho preserved by Josephus (Jos. *Ap.* 1.73–92, 227–87 = FF8 and 10, Waddell FF42 and 54). Going back to Braun, I note that he saw that an essential difference exists between how the second Hyksos narrative is framed by Manetho and how the allied text Ps.-Callisthenes begins: while in the Ps.-Callisthenes, the narrative unfolds and is explained by Nectanebo's dream of the gods' abandonment of Egypt, we are told that the pharaoh Amenophis desired to become an 'observer of the gods', but was told by his namesake, the seer Amenophis son of Paapis, that he could

¹ See esp. Braun 1938: 3–5. Mention should also be made of Smith 1978/1993: 67–87.

² For a brief but insightful critique of Braun, see Johnson 2004: 96 and n. 7.

³ Hereafter I shall refer to citations of Manetho from Jacoby only by 'F' and 'T', Waddell by 'Waddell'.

do so only after he had rid Egypt of the unclean ‘lepers’. In short, Manetho has ‘historicised’ a traditional, ‘proto-apocalyptic’ narrative (using J. Z. Smith’s terminology (1978/1993)), whereas Ps.-Callisthenes is a more direct adaptation of traditional Egyptian narrative techniques. A comparison of what Manetho has done with current scholarly discussion in South-Asian Studies, in particular by Romila Thapar and others, of the notion of ‘embedded’ historiography concludes the paper.

Introduction

Manetho is ideal for coming to grips with how narrative worked in helping people to control their past and define themselves in terms of a distinct culture or civilisation. An Egyptian priest working in the earliest years of Ptolemaic rule, he wrote a history of Egypt in Greek called the *Aegyptiaca*.⁴ But if the potential is great for using Manetho’s narratives as a way into the issues of curating the past and national identity, he has not always fared well at the hands of his readers and interpreters, in antiquity and later – indeed, right down to the present. The man who preserved all of the extensive narrative of Manetho that we still possess, the Jewish historian of the first century CE, Josephus, follows him closely at several points, but only to accuse him at another of using suspect sources, indeed acting as his own interpolator of ‘mythical lore’ into his account. Christian writers made use of Manetho’s chronography, but ignored his narratives except for brief chronicle notices;⁵ and the chief Christian authority through whom the chronography of Manetho survives in Greek found Manetho’s time scheme laughably impossible, much like that of his historiographic ‘twin’ Berossus.⁶

⁴ Plutarch asserts that Manetho helped establish the Sarapis cult for Ptolemy I (T3, Waddell F8o = Plut. *Mor.* 361f–62a); George Syncellus (ninth century CE) at several points speaks of Manetho as active in the reign of Ptolemy II (T11a–c = *Ecloga Chronographica* Mosshammer 1984: 40–1, 18, 17). Hereafter I shall refer to texts drawn from Syncellus as ‘Syncellus *Ecloga* page number M’. For further treatment of Manetho at the early Ptolemaic court, see esp. Fraser 1972: 1.505–6, and cf. Dillery 1999a and 2007.

⁵ Whether the brief descriptive tags in Manetho’s chronography represent places where there was once narrative, or whether they were simply chronicle notices from the outset, is a large question; cf. below n. 13.

⁶ Syncellus *Ecloga* 18 M, though in opposition to earlier Christian authors, e.g. Panodorus, who had salvaged Berossus’ absurd figure for world history (432,000 years) by dividing it by the number of days in the year (365); see esp. Adler 1983: 436. Syncellus’ main source, the third-century Christian chronographer Julius Africanus, took a similarly dim view of the enormous extent of Egyptian historical time: Syncellus *Ecloga* 17–18 M = Wallraff 2007: 24 F15. On Berossus, see also Haubold, this volume.

Later, in the Renaissance, Manetho was valued, but for the wrong reasons: along with Berossus, he became a name on which to hang modern forgeries that pretended to be authentic ancient narrative.⁷ One French scholar in the nineteenth century even went the next logical step and simply argued Manetho out of human history altogether, using the admittedly striking similarities between him and Berossus as proof that neither really existed.⁸ This tendency to wish Manetho away has continued to the present day.⁹ Most recently, arguing that he is unrepresentative of Egyptian historiography, an eminent Egyptologist chose not to include Manetho in his otherwise excellent essay on 'Egyptian historiography' in the *Oxford History of Historical Writing*.¹⁰

What is wrong with Manetho? While scholars are willing to accept his chronography – indeed they really have no choice, since it forms the cornerstone of modern Egyptology – I think that Manetho, and Berossus too for that matter, are viewed as simply impossible: you cannot have non-Greeks writing, in Greek, native histories of their lands in response to Macedonian conquest and Greek scholarship so shortly after the death of Alexander the Great. A little quiet reflection reveals this position to be untenable for several reasons. In the first place, it renders equally improbable the earlier contemporary of Herodotus, Xanthus the Lydian, a non-Greek who wrote a native history of his land in Greek a century before Alexander's campaigns. Secondly, and more importantly, this view recklessly periodises: it obscures or even erases the many contacts between the Greek and Egyptian worlds that predate Manetho, and that make his knowledge of Greek and Greek historiography seem less remarkable and unanticipated.

If we can begin by assuming that the narratives of Manetho we possess via Josephus are substantially what he wrote,¹¹ and furthermore that there

⁷ Note in particular the late fifteenth-century Dominican friar, Annius of Viterbo: Grafton 1983/1992: 2.77–8, and more extensively 1991: ch. 3.

⁸ Havet 1873.

⁹ Yoyotte 1997: 31, Krauss 2006, and in particular Gorre 2009: 483 and n. 26 (and cf. 473 and n. 7), citing Yoyotte with approval, doubting key parts of the biography of Manetho.

¹⁰ Baines 2011: 54: '[a] view of Egyptian historiography that takes Manetho as its point of departure gives only a distanced perspective. Egypt, like many civilizations, did not develop a genre of written discursive narrative or analysis of the past, but from the beginning of the Dynastic period onward (c. 3000) the past was curated intensively in writing'.

¹¹ An enormous problem of course. I do note, however, that in the one place where we can check Josephus in the *Ap.* against a known text transmitted separately, he managed to reproduce the original text almost exactly: Hdt. 2.104.3–4 at Jos. *Ap.* 1.169–70 (and cf. Jos. *AJ.* 8.262). See Inowlocki 2005a. Her findings suggest that Josephus was a relatively good preserver of other authors' words, a judgement borne out indirectly by the research of Van der Horst, who demonstrates the highly unusual word-choice of the *Ap.*, due in part to extensive quotation of other authors (see esp. Van der Horst 1996: 85).

were others like them in the *Aegyptiaca* where stand now some (probably not all) of the narrative tags in the separately transmitted epitome of his chronography, then important insights can be gained into how Manetho both preserved the ancient past of Egypt and at the same time adapted his native scholarly tradition to new purposes, in part defined by his encounter with Greek historical writing on Egypt. His deployment of traditional Egyptian narrative forms in new settings, along with subtle adjustments he made especially to the frames of the narratives, will constitute the main lines of study in the present essay.

* * *

Three long narratives of Manetho survive to us, all from Josephus and all from his great historiographic treatise, *Against Apion*: the Shepherd fragment (or what I designate Hyksos I), F8, Waddell F42 = Jos. *Ap.* 1.73–92; the story of Sethos and Harmais, F9, Waddell F50 = Jos. *Ap.* 1.93–105; and the leper fragment (which I designate Hyksos II), F10, Waddell F54 = Jos. *Ap.* 1.227–87.¹² It should be noted that all three surviving narratives concern matters relating to the Second Intermediate Period and the early years of the New Kingdom (Dynasty 18), events that are presented in Josephus as corresponding to the story of the biblical Exodus.

Inasmuch as I believe the most critical issue in the interpretation of Manetho's narratives to be how they are framed and, in a larger sense, how they are made to work within the chronographic scheme of the *Aegyptiaca*, I want to begin with his story of the royal brothers Sethos and Harmais. My reason for this choice is that this narrative seems to give us our best sense of how precisely Manetho married narrative to chronography.¹³ Josephus reports nineteen successive kings and queens together with their regnal lengths (years and months), from the time of the expulsion of the Hyksos to the rule of Ramesses II. This information is styled by Josephus as material Manetho himself 'says' (φησὶ δὲ οὕτως), that is, that the Manethonian material he cites is direct quotation from the *Aegyptiaca*. Here is the end of the list and the switchover to narrative: '... Harmesses Miamoun [ruled] sixty-six years and two months; his son Amenophis [ruled] nineteen years and six months. His son Sethos, also known as Ramesses, having a cavalry and naval force made his brother overseer of Egypt...' (F9a, F50 Waddell = Jos. *Ap.* 1.97–98). As it is presented in Josephus, Manetho's text would seem to be made up of a long narrative (Hyksos I), followed by a bridge of simple entries of king names and

¹² Cf. Meyer 1904: 71–8.

¹³ Fraser 1972: 2.734–5 n. 124; Dillery 1999a: 95 and 2007: 226.

lengths of rule, until narrative is resumed more than three centuries later (to be specific, 333 years) with the start of the reign of Sethos/Ramesses II. Manetho must have been making choices as he moved from one narrative panel to the next, for there was surely something otherwise worthy of narrative in those more than 300 years of Egyptian history.

Sethos and Harmais: a Herodotean ‘novella’

The narrative of Sethos and Harmais is an artful and dynamic passage, though not at all large. It is built around the motifs of the sudden change of fortune and fraternal treachery. As such it looks a great deal like a specific type of Herodotean *logos* discussed by e.g. Aly and Trenkner: short, sharply drawn narratives that they call ‘novellae’ in which characters experience a sudden reversal of fortune, and which can be compared especially with tragic plots.¹⁴ I translate it here in full:

Sethos, also known as Ramesses, having a cavalry and naval force, made his brother Harmais overseer of Egypt and bestowed upon him all the rest of his royal authority, only he enjoined him not to wear the diadem nor to do wrong to the queen and mother of his children, and to keep away from the rest of the royal concubines. He himself launched an expedition against Cyprus, Phoenicia, and again against the Assyrians and the Medes, and all of them, some by the spear and some without battle but by fear of his massive force, he made subject. Having grown ambitious because of his successes he was proceeding still more boldly against the cities and lands of the east, conquering them. When a good amount of time had passed, Harmais, who had been left in Egypt, without fear was doing the opposite of the things his brother was requiring him not to do: for he treated the queen violently and was freely and frequently having sex with the rest of the concubines, and persuaded by his friends was wearing the diadem and rebelled against his brother. But the one who had been placed in charge of the temples of Egypt wrote a letter and sent it to Sethos, making clear to him everything and that his brother Harmais had revolted against him. At once he turned back to Pelusium and took charge of his kingdom. And the land was called Aegyptus after his name (Jos. *Ap.* 1.98–102).

To be sure, the essentials of the story are old folk motifs and must be counted almost universal concepts: the overconfidence of the king, the

¹⁴ Aly 1921; Trenkner 1958, esp. 24. See also Gray 2002. I am not unaware that the term ‘novella’ is problematic: see esp. de Jong 2002a: 257–8. For my purposes, the terminology is not important; rather, that Herodotus and others clearly deployed as a distinct subset of narratives such short, moralising tales, whatever one wants to call them.

treachery of a brother.¹⁵ On closer inspection, though, certain forms of expression become instantly recognisable – indeed they fairly jump off the page. At the level of single word or concept, Manetho's use of the word 'diadem' as the symbol of royal power worn on the head is deeply significant. As R. R. R. Smith has put it, 'the only invariable attribute of the [Hellenistic] kings was the diadem',¹⁶ almost certainly Greek in origin and intimately associated specifically with Macedonian-Greek kingship early on in the Hellenistic period, indeed from that moment in 306 when Antigonus Monophthalmus and his son Demetrius Poliorcetes took up the diadem as part of their claim to the legacy of Alexander the Great, and were then immediately imitated by the rest of the Diadochs.¹⁷ If a term genuinely used by Manetho for Harmais' usurpation of power, his taking up of the diadem here would be particularly apt as a description of the competitive power politics of the early Hellenistic period, but wildly anachronistic from the point of view of pharaonic Egypt. Of course, in general it is dangerous to build too much of an argument or interpretation on the basis of one word, and I hesitate to press the point. Elsewhere Josephus himself uses the term 'diadem' in similar contexts – pharaonic Egypt – where Manetho is clearly not a source.¹⁸

More promising is the phrase Manetho uses to describe the official who informs Sethos of his brother's treachery: 'the one who had been placed in charge of the temples of Egypt' – ὁ δὲ τεταγμένος ἐπὶ τῶν ἱερῶν τῆς Αἰγύπτου. It has for some time been recognised that the phrase can be interpreted in two ways: as a translation of an old Egyptian formula 'overseer of the priests of Upper and Lower Egypt', and as an almost word-for-word borrowing of a Ptolemaic description exactly contemporary with Manetho for the high-priests of Egyptian temples: οἱ ἐπὶ τῶν ἱερῶν τεταγμένοι (*P. Rev. Laws* 51.9 = *Sel. Pap.* 2.26; cf. Bagnall & Derow 2004: 192, Austin 2006: 529).¹⁹ The phrase here at *Ap.* 1.101, whether reading 'temples' (ἱερῶν)

¹⁵ In connection with the figure of Harmais only, we find in Thompson's *Motif-Index of Folk Literature* for example: K2211 ('the treacherous brother'), K2242 ('the treacherous steward') and K2248 ('the treacherous minister'). The account told of Sesostri's return to Egypt from campaigning at Hdt. 2.107 is obviously related: Lloyd (1975/1988): 3.28. Cf. Dillery 1999a: 100. Of particular relevance here is the Egyptian story dating to the reign of Seti II (1200–1194 BCE), 'The Tale of the Two Brothers', 'a sort of fairy tale . . . draw[ing] richly upon mythological and folkloristic themes': Wente 2003: 80. See also Hollis 1990. Note, however, that the tale is essentially non-royal, with the king playing a relatively 'minor' and 'inconsequential' role: Silverman 1995: 53.

¹⁶ Smith 1993: 207; in general consult Smith 1988: 34–9 and Ritter 1965; note also Müller 2009: 76–81.

¹⁷ Smith 1988: 37; cf. Ritter 1965: 31–78. Grenze 1921, that the royal ornament derived from Achaemenid practice, has been shown to be incorrect.

¹⁸ Jos. *Ap.* 2.233 and 235; the infant Moses and the 'diadem' of Egypt. Cf. Ritter 1965: 13 and n. 2.

¹⁹ Waddell 1940: 104 textual n. 3 ('cf. *Revenue Laws* . . .') and explanatory n. 1 ('[a] frequent title from the Old Kingdom onwards . . .') reveals the overlap. Cf. Dillery 1999a: 99–100 and n. 21. Note

or ‘priests’ (ἱερέων), is unique in the whole of Josephus’ large corpus, and so the temptation is to see it as coming not from Josephus’ idiolect, but as instead a bit of genuine Manetho.²⁰ Indeed, if Manetho himself was high up in the priestly administration at Heliopolis – an admittedly late testimonium from a hostile source even refers to him as ‘high priest of the accursed temples in Egypt’ (T11 b = Syncellus *Ecloga* 18 M; cf. T11a and T1) – it is not too far-fetched to think that he may have been similarly addressed himself in official correspondence (cf. T4 = *P.Hibeh* I 72).

Words and phrases, perhaps betraying a more than passing knowledge of contemporary Greek, are one thing; a deeper incorporation of Greek narrative mannerisms quite another. But how on earth can a distinctly ‘Greek’ way of telling a story be identified? And what does one do with such knowledge, if indeed it can be established? The honest answer is that we cannot determine what a truly Greek narrative is, but I do think it is worthwhile comparing Manetho’s Sethos and Harmais story with Greek narratives, especially historical ones, in order to set the stage for looking at his two Hyksos stories, which I take to be significantly more indebted to native Egyptian traditions.

I mentioned just above that Manetho’s narrative of royal brothers has distinct folk-tale motifs. But with that said, I think we can go further when we turn to the summation of Sethos’ achievements while on campaign, and the plans he formed for future conquest that were derailed by news of his brother’s treachery. It is worth quoting the passage again, together with the Greek:

Having grown ambitious because of his successes he was proceeding still more boldly against the cities and lands of the east, conquering them.

καὶ μέγα φρονήσας ἐπὶ ταῖς εὐπραγίαις ἔτι καὶ θαρσαλεώτερον ἐπεπορεύετο τὰς πρὸς ἀνατολὰς πόλεις τε καὶ χώρας καταστρεφόμενος.

The phrase ‘having grown ambitious because of his successes’ (μέγα φρονήσας ἐπὶ ταῖς εὐπραγίαις) is key. To ‘think big’ (*mega phronesai*) and its allied noun ‘thinking big’ (*megalophrosyne*) are phrases familiar from Herodotus, where they are central to the characterisation in particular of Xerxes (note esp. Hdt. 7.24, 136.2; and cf. Artabanus’ remarks

also the Canopus Decree, *OGIS* 56 line 73: ὁ δὲ ἐν ἐκάστῳ τῶν ἱερῶν καθεστῆκώς ἐπιστάτης καὶ ἀρχιερεὺς. In general, consult Clarysse 1999. Note that the Emperor Augustus inaugurated a policy of installing a Roman official as ‘High Priest of Alexandria and Egypt’: Frankfurter 1998: 27.

²⁰ The nearest parallel is Jos. *BJ* 6.121: of Jewish rebels placing artillery on their battlements, ἐπὶ τῶν ἱερῶν πυλῶν τοὺς τε ὀχυβελεῖς . . . διέστησαν. Note in particular that ἱερῶν is clearly used as an attributive adjective, not substantively, and that in general it is a material structure that is being described, not a priestly office.

7.10e and 46.3).²¹ Three points are worth drawing out here. While it might be objected that Xerxes is clearly in Herodotus' eyes a deeply flawed and tyrannical ruler, whereas Sethos would seem to be a good one in Manetho's treatment, it should be noted that *megalphrosyne* leading to calamity need not imply 'wrongdoing' on the part of the ruler, but rather 'greatness' of ambition that is scuttled by an unforeseen circumstance.²² Secondly, it is essential also to observe that the working out of the implications of the ruler's 'grand thinking' is not an isolated moment, but itself creates a narrative arc of explanation, something that in Herodotus stretches out for the last three books of his *History* in the matter of Xerxes' *megalphrosyne*.²³ This is to say that the whole set of events that form the context of Sethos' 'big thinking', those that lead up to it and those that are somehow connected to it subsequently, constitutes a distinct narrative pattern; *megalphronesai* and the things that happen in connection with it is *a way to tell a story*, not just an isolable detail of a story. And finally, it is possible to see *megalphrosyne* and its narrative pattern of human calamity in the context of great success not just in Herodotus, but in other Greek historians (Thucydides, Xenophon), as well as Greek poetry and oratory.²⁴ It is a widespread and typically Greek way of telling a story. In essence, the man who believes he is at the height of success, and because of that confidence, plans still more ambitious enterprises, only to have those plans go awry, undergoes a *peripeteia* of sorts – a mode of explanation that overlaps with universal themes to be sure, but that is worked out in ways that are recognisable in a host of Greek authors.²⁵

At the core of *peripeteia*, as Aristotle knew, was a causal link between the circumstances of the person of interest, the sudden change of fortune, and the recognition by the person of that change: 'the *peripeteia* and recognition should arise just from the plot, so that it is necessary or probable that they should follow what went before (ὥστε ἐκ τῶν προγεγενημένων συμβαίνειν ἢ ἐξ ἀνάγκης ἢ κατὰ τὸ εἰκὸς γίγνεσθαι ταῦτα); for there is a great difference between happening next and happening as a result' (Arist. *Po.* 1452^a).²⁶

²¹ Immerwahr 1966: 177.

²² Cf. Munson 2001: 185, whose language I have adapted here; see too the excellent discussion of Baragwanath 2008: 254–69, in particular 264 and n. 75; also Van Ophuijsen and Stork (1999) 120. Cf. Dillery 1999a: 100–1.

²³ Often noted, but particularly well put by Solmsen 1974: 149 = 1982: 87.

²⁴ Note LSJ s.v. φρονέω II2b and the *lemmata* cited there. Also Munson 2001: 185 and n. 132. Pelling 1991: 120–2 has an excellent discussion of how themes articulated by Herodotus' Artabanus and Thucydides' Archidamus are prefigured in earlier Greek literature, especially Homer and tragedy.

²⁵ Cf. Dillery 1999a: 100–1. On the *megalphrosyne* of Xerxes at the start of Hdt. 7 and the concept of the *peripeteia* of the Persians, see Solmsen 1974: 149 = 1982: 87.

²⁶ Hubbard trans. 1972: 104.

So, to borrow Aristotle's own exemplum, the messenger in Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus* should provide the hero 'comfort' – i.e., a solution to his troubles – but instead 'he did the opposite'. Sethos' successes buoyed him up and encouraged him to form even more daring plans; it was precisely at this moment that Harmais' treachery was reported to him. This narrative fashioning looks to me as though Manetho was influenced by specifically Greek ways of telling stories. In particular, Herodotus, whom we know for other reasons Manetho read closely (cf. *FGrH* 609T7a = Jos. *Ap.* 1.73),²⁷ is simply festooned with such narratives. Focusing just on the theme of calamity attending great success brought about through treachery within the royal family, I can cite from the very start of Herodotus' *History* the story of Candaules, his wife, and Gyges (*Hdt.* 1.8–12). More to the point, there are in Herodotus *logoi* that even feature destructive strife between royal brothers, as well as infidelity and the betrayal of trust: Cambyzes suspects his brother Smerdis (wrongly of course, *Hdt.* 3.30), and Xerxes notoriously intrigues to seduce first his brother Masistes' wife, and then his daughter, with tragic results for Masistes, who almost succeeds in doing serious harm to Xerxes in his revolt from the king (*Hdt.* 9.108–13). Xenophon may provide an even closer parallel to Manetho's Sethos and Harmais story: at the height of her success, with a sizeable mercenary army under her control and the complete confidence of her liege-lord Pharnabazus, the governor of the Troad, a woman named Mania is assassinated by her own son-in-law Meidias – he, just as Harmais, stirred to this action by his hangers-on (*Xen. Hell.* 3.1.10–15).²⁸ If Manetho did take up such a narrative device from Herodotus or some other Greek writer, it would be evidence not of a trivial or incidental borrowing, but the adaptation of a large-scale narrative feature.

It remains, finally, to take account of the parallel narrative of Sesostris and his brother at *Hdt.* 2.107. While the story we find there is clearly related to Manetho's tale of Sethos and Harmais in broad outline – the brother of the world-conquering pharaoh, to whom the kingdom has been entrusted, proves disloyal – the differences of detail and tone are significant and argue against Manetho responding specifically to Herodotus in his version of events. In Herodotus' tale Sesostris is not called back in the midst of successful campaigning to deal with his brother's treachery, rather he encounters it upon his return from action; he is directly attacked by his

²⁷ Josephus alleges that Manetho refutes Herodotus on a number of points of Egyptian history.

²⁸ Cf. *Xen. An.* 3.1.27–8. It is significant that Gray has detected in the Mania story distinct Herodotean overtones, especially from the story of Queen Artemisia: Gray 1989: 29–32; cf. Cartledge 1993: 8–9, Hornblower 2006: 311. For Xenophon's debt to Herodotus, see esp. Riemann 1967: 20–7, as well as Gray 1989. The Herodotean and Xenophontine parallels with Manetho are cited in Dillery 1999a: 100–1.

brother (his residence at Daphnae near Pelusium is set afire), together with his family; and perhaps most importantly, there is no sense of *peripeteia* in the account. Rather, the focus in Herodotus is on the extremity of Sesostris' method of escape from his brother's trap: on his wife's suggestion, Sesostris sacrifices two of their sons by using them as a bridge out of the burning building in order to save himself and the rest of his family. The theme of salvation won through the death or serious injury of a loved one or even oneself is a favourite of Herodotus: recall, e.g., the thief's brother in the Rhampsinitus story (2.121.b),²⁹ the self-mutilation of Hegesistratus (9.37.2) and the wife of Intaphrenes (3.119.3–6).

The Hyksos: framing and the historicisation of prophetic narrative

If the Sethos and Harmais story encourages us to see Manetho adapting Greek narrative mannerisms in the creation of his own stories for his *Aegyptiaca*, its longest-preserved accounts that (again) come to us by way of Josephus push us in a different direction. But as a preliminary to looking at Manetho's two Hyksos tales, it is important to survey briefly the historical narrative types that would have been known to Manetho from his native Egyptian tradition, focusing especially on those that are relevant here. As John Baines has well observed, 'Egypt, like many civilizations, did not develop a genre of written discursive narrative or analysis of the past, but from the beginning of the Dynastic period onward (c. 3000) the past was curated intensively in writing'.³⁰ Indeed, although the Egyptians did not possess 'a genre of written discursive narrative or analysis of the past', their engagement with the past through writing and other media was profound. While in all human societies the present and future are in some sense created out of the past, 'the character of Egyptian evidence, its time depth, and the type of society which created it, are all distinctive'.³¹ The past in Egypt was vast, rich and detailed, and the ways to control it correspondingly multiform and complex. Essentially there are two axes that help to define Egyptian methods for treating the past: royal vs. non-royal subject matter on the one hand, and inscribed text and visual representation vs. non-monumental text on the other.³²

The figure of the king was especially important and biform: when using his divine power as e.g. the issuer of decrees, the one who appoints officials, or who acts as representative for humanity before the gods, the word

²⁹ Importantly, recognised by Lloyd as 'fundamentally Eg[yp]tian': Lloyd (1975/1988) 3.53.

³⁰ Baines 2011: 54; cf. 73. ³¹ Baines 2007: 180.

³² Cf. Baines 2007: 4–10 and 281–97.

used in Egyptian texts is *nwst*, translated ‘king’; when in reference to the person who happened to be king at any given point in time, the word was *hm*, translated ‘his majesty’ or ‘incarnation’, that is, of royal power.³³ A distinct type of narrative developed in pharaonic Egypt that has been labelled by modern scholars the *Königsnovelle* or ‘King’s novel’.³⁴ Not a genre *per se*, but rather a mode of presentation found in a number of different types of texts,³⁵ in the Egyptian ‘King’s novel’ a moment of uncertainty or even danger is ‘overcome’ by the decree or action of the king, often after he has consulted his council and either taken or refused its advice. Ultimately, the narrative is designed to emphasise the ‘correctness of the king’s plan’ – that thanks solely to his planning and efforts Egypt meets the challenge, e.g., to rebuild a sacred structure or defeat an invader, and succeeds.³⁶ It will be remembered that in Manetho’s Sethos story Pharaoh’s ‘big plan’ is (significantly) detailed.

In recent years, thanks especially to the findings of Ludwig Koenen, an allied narrative form of Egyptian historical literature can be made out that is particularly important for the interpretation of Manetho: the ‘prophetic *Königsnovelle*’.³⁷ Dating back at least to the Twelfth Dynasty (1990–1785 BCE) and the *Prophecy of Neferti*, a mode of discourse can be found in Egyptian texts that has been labelled *Chaosbeschreibung*: actual historical circumstances are cast in a pseudo-prophetic text and a ‘future’ Egypt is imagined wherein the natural and human worlds are attacked and subjugated by the forces of Chaos representing Seth, requiring the restitution of order (Ma’at) through Pharaoh acting as Osiris/Horus.³⁸ The ending of the *Prophecy of Neferti* captures the outlook particularly well:³⁹

Then a king will come from the South / Amen, the justified, by name,
/ . . . Asiatics will fall to his sword, / Libyans will fall to his flame, / . . . One
will build the Walls-of-the-Ruler, / to bar Asiatics from entering Egypt; / they
shall beg water as supplicants, / so as to let their cattle drink. Then Order
[Ma’at] will return to its seat . . . (Translation Lichtheim 1973/1980: 1.143)

³³ Silverman 1995: 64; Allen 2000: 31. Cf. Gardiner 1957: 74–5; Loprieno 1996c: 279 n. 10.

³⁴ See Hermann 1938; also Osing 1979; Spalinger 1982: 101–14; Loprieno 1996c; important also Koenen 1985: 185–94 and 2002: 172–83; Baines 2011: 68.

³⁵ Loprieno 1996c: 280.

³⁶ Hermann 1938: 19 ‘*Richtigkeit des königlichen Planes*’; quoted by Spalinger 1982: 102 and n. 6, whom I follow closely here.

³⁷ See esp. Koenen 2002: 173 and 1985: 188–94. See also Frankfurter 1998: 158 and 241–8, Dillery 1999a: 102 and 2005: 390 and n. 16.

³⁸ See esp. Assmann 1990; also 2002: 94–5, 107 and 187–8. Cf. Baines 1995: 12 and 45–6, who has some reservations regarding Assmann 1990.

³⁹ Also illustrative is the contemporary text (Twelfth Dynasty) *The Admonitions of Ipuwer*: Lichtheim 1973/1980: 1.149–63. Cf. Kuhrt 1995: 1.160.

Clearly the effect of this mode of discourse can be seen to be at odds with the standard narrative trajectories of the *Königsnovelle*: evils are predicted for Egypt that cannot be avoided; either the king or a later pharaoh will remove the enemy and restore order, but only after a period of chaos and loss. Egypt suffers and the king is reactive, not proactive, indeed he can be seen to fail. Hence when the mode of *Chaosbeschreibung* is added to a *Königsnovelle* narrative, the effect is both to signal the unfolding of a king-centred story promising the monarch's solution to a grave crisis for Egypt, though now set in the context of a period of defeat for Egypt that will at some future point be brought to an end by the ruler. The divine authorisation implicit in the *Königsnovelle* encounters the divine authorisation implicit in the foreordained period of crisis and difficulty for Egypt.

Koenen and others have argued that this blending of apparently contradictory literary forms, the narrative of the *Königsnovelle* as envisioned through the lens of *Chaosbeschreibung*, grew out of the Egyptian response to foreign domination. The utility of such a combination in explaining the foreign invasion and rule of Egypt is not hard to see: through the *vaticinium ex eventu* structure, the non-native occupation of Egypt is accounted for as the result of divine will, but at the same time limits are set upon it and the promise of the return of legitimate kingship and thus the restoration of Ma'at is imagined as guaranteed.

Both of Manetho's Hyksos narratives can be seen to demonstrate features of both the *Königsnovelle* and *Chaosbeschreibung*. At the start of the first, Hyksos I (T7a and F8, Waddell F42 = Jos. *Ap.* 1.73–92), Josephus is careful to present Manetho's credentials: while an Egyptian by birth, he 'possessed Greek learning' (τῆς Ἑλληνικῆς μετεσχηκῶς παιδείας), as was demonstrable by his authorship in Greek of a 'national history' (γέγραφεν . . . τὴν πατριον ἱστορίαν) derived from sacred records (ἐκ δέλτων ἱερῶν),⁴⁰ 'as he himself asserts' (ὥς φησιν αὐτός), having himself done the work of translation, and in the process found several instances where Herodotus produced false information about Egypt, not deliberately, but 'out of ignorance' (ὑπ' ἀγνοίας ἐψευσμένον). Perhaps most significantly, Josephus asserts that 'I will quote his own words (παραθήσομαι δὲ τὴν λέξιν αὐτοῦ), just as if

⁴⁰ The passage concerning the nature of Manetho's sources contains a major textual difficulty: the manuscript L at *Ap.* 1.73 reads γέγραφεν γὰρ Ἑλλάδι φωνῇ τὴν πατριον ἱστορίαν ἐκ τε τῶν ἱερῶν, Eusebius (*Praeparatio Evangelica* 10.13.1) has ἱερῶν (and cf. the Latin trans. *sacris libris*). Various solutions have been proposed. Gutschmid 1893: 420 suggested ἐκ δέλτων ἱερῶν, and is followed by Reinach 1930: 15 and Waddell. Jacoby T7a prints ἐκ τε τῶν ἱερῶν <γραμμάτων>. Cf. Dillery 1999a: 98.

having brought forward the man as a witness (μάρτυρα), i.e., into a court of law. Josephus wants to vouch for Manetho's expertise and knowledge in Egyptian matters, but at the same time to insist upon Manetho's awareness of Greek historical writing on Egypt and its shortcomings.

It is important to examine this introduction with a view to understanding how Josephus regarded it as useful in shaping the expectations of the reader regarding the subsequent narrative.⁴¹ Josephus seems to want to emphasise that what follows will be a sacred tale from Egypt's past, drawn from Egyptian writings that Manetho himself translated.⁴² As such, the narrative is meant to be authoritative – indeed it is crucial for Josephus' purposes that it be seen so, since the central point of the *Against Apion* is to set non-Greek texts against Greek ones and show the latter wrong about the antiquity of the Jews (cf. Jos. *Ap.* 1.2–14). Hence, we can expect that the story that follows Josephus' introduction to Manetho will contradict in places Greek accounts, and at the very least will have a view of the past that will be Egyptian in orientation, though presented through the Greek language.

Hyksos I begins in a manner that, if accurately transmitted by Josephus, demonstrates again how Manetho married narrative text to chronological frame:⁴³

Tutimaheus. During this king's reign, for reasons I do not know, god blew a contrary wind (ἀντέπνευσεν), and against expectation (παράδοξως) out of the regions to the East men unmarked in their race (τὸ γένος ἄσημοι) became bold and launched a campaign against our land, and easily, without a fight (ῥαδίως ἀμαχητί), took this land by force (ταύτην κατὰ κράτος εἶλον). Having defeated the ones who were leaders in the land, they then savagely (ὠμῶς) burnt down our cities and demolished the temples of the gods (τὰ τῶν θεῶν ἱερὰ κατέσκαψαν), and in general treated all the inhabitants in the most hostile fashion (ἐχθρότατα), slaughtering some, and taking the children and wives of others into slavery.⁴⁴

Military invasion, regime change, the destruction of cities and the assault upon the native population – this is an all-too familiar narrative

⁴¹ I have argued elsewhere that much of the information Josephus passes on about Manetho and his composition of the *Aegyptiaca* would have fit nicely in a proem, a very Greek enterprise, but one that would have declared an utterly different, Egyptian perspective on how to curate the past: Dillery 1999a: 97–8.

⁴² I have deliberately used the vague term 'writings' here, insofar as this crucial passage is textually uncertain: see above n. 39.

⁴³ See above on the Harmais and Sethos novella. ⁴⁴ Jos. *Ap.* 1.75–6 = F8, Waddell F42.

arc, and perhaps for that reason not a promising place to discover the distinctive in Manetho's historiography. But a second look at some of the details of the opening of the story reveals an orientation that connects the text to the thought world of the Egyptian priest in Late Period Egypt. Eduard Meyer and, following him, W. G. Waddell, considered the story so conspicuous in its adherence to traditional Egyptian narrative details that it would not be surprising 'if Manetho's description reappeared word for word one day in a hieratic papyrus'.⁴⁵

It is important at the outset to note that the divine is the first to act, and that it does so *against* Egypt in the form of a 'blast', that is a windstorm (cf. Ps.-Callisthenes 2.2: a cloud of enemies). In substance, this blast will in fact be an invasion of Easterners. Secondly, and a related point, it is also noteworthy that the conquest of Egypt is brought off by the invader 'easily' and 'without a fight', suggesting again the involvement of the divine in Egypt's humiliation. These are extraordinary details that would benefit from explanation, but none is forthcoming.⁴⁶ Evidently, these facts explain themselves for Manetho. In contrast to the informed reader of Manetho's text who can apparently decode these significant details of his narrative, the narrative itself implies an ill-informed, indeed a surprised witness to the events: with the term *παράδοξως* ('against expectation') the narrator focalises the invasion through the eyes of someone surprised by the attack.⁴⁷ Finally, it is crucial also to see that the destruction of Egyptian places includes prominently the temples of the gods (τὰ τῶν θεῶν ἱερά), and that the assault upon the people of Egypt is characterised as conducted in 'the most hostile fashion' (ἐχθρότατα), that is, in a way typical of an especially violent and determined enemy (ἐχθρός).

Each of these details requires unpacking, and in so doing, we shall see that the introduction of Hyksos 1 could only have been fully intelligible to other elite priests of Egypt such as Manetho, or (crucially) those who had access to their knowledge. The use of *παράδοξως* is our gateway into the text, inviting a reading that brings with it knowledge of the 'code' that comes from being an Egyptian priest conversant with texts such as Hyksos 1. 'Against' or 'contrary to expectation' is left unglossed in Manetho. By contrast, the equivalent phrase in Herodotus is always explained, with the surprised party's reaction carefully identified in a pleonastic expression:

⁴⁵ Meyer 1907/1954: 313; Waddell 1940: 79 n. 2. The quote is from Waddell; Meyer actually wrote that the new 'text' would be a papyrus from the New Kingdom.

⁴⁶ Dillery 2007: 227. ⁴⁷ Cf. de Jong 1987: 34. More generally, de Jong 2002a.

‘Inasmuch as for him [sc. Croesus] matters turned out contrary to expectation from what he was expecting’ (ὥς οἱ παρὰ δόξαν ἔσχε τὰ πρήγματα ἢ ὥς αὐτὸς κατεδόκεε Hdt. 1.79.2).⁴⁸ The difference between Manetho’s practice and that of Herodotus brings out the function of παραδόξως at the start of Hyksos I. An unmotivated detail, the adverb will help to distinguish the reader from the historical agents of the narrative, as one for whom the details of the invasion will turn out to be completely understandable – *not* contrary to expectation.

A ‘blast’ from the East connects Manetho’s account to the central Egyptian myth of the conflict of Horus and Seth, a story that became crucial in helping the Egyptians to define notions of kingship and legitimacy during the Late Period, and especially during the Persian, and later, the Greco-Macedonian dominations of Egypt.⁴⁹ Seth was the god of storm, and also represented chaos and absence of legitimate rule. The ease with which the invaders gain control of Egypt (ῥαδίως ἀμαχητί ‘easily, without a fight’) is to be connected to the sponsorship of the campaign by Egypt’s own gods. Although earlier it had not been the case, since at least the Late Period, calamity in Egypt had to be divinely authorised. The foreign domination of Egypt had to be accounted for, and yet the notion of lawful kingship also preserved, with its vital role as intermediary between divine and human in insuring the cosmic order (Ma’at) and the favour of the gods. To borrow the terminology of Assmann, the divine authorisation of calamity for Egypt involves both ‘deuteronomism’ and ‘messianism’: deuteronomism explains the evil that befalls Egypt as punishment for the wrongdoing of bad kings, whereas ‘messianism’ offers the promise that a lawful king will return to Egypt to restore Ma’at.⁵⁰ We see this dual orientation in Egyptian texts from the Persian through the Greco-Roman periods: the *Demotic Chronicle* and the *Oracles of the Lamb* and *Potter* especially come to mind.⁵¹

But of particular interest in connection with Manetho’s Hyksos I narrative are the opening to Ps.-Callisthenes’ *Alexander Romance*, the *Dream of*

⁴⁸ Cf. Hdt. 8.4.1 (virtually the same wording as 1.79.2): ‘since for [the Greeks] the matters of the barbarians were turning out contrary to expectation than what they were expecting’ (ἐπεὶ αὐτοῖσι παρὰ δόξαν τὰ πρήγματα τῶν βαρβάρων ἀπέβαινε ἢ ὥς αὐτοὶ κατεδόκεον). Look also at 8.11.3. Cf. Bowie 2007: 93 ad Hdt. 8.4.1, citing Kühner-Gerth 1890/1904: 2.586. Thucydides seems more in line with how Manetho has used παραδόξως. He has both the expression παρὰ δόξαν, and coined a new term with great importance for him: ὁ παράλογος ‘unpredictability’ or the ‘unpredictable element’ itself, perhaps most famously at Thuc. 1.78.1. See Finley 1967: 140–9. I owe these refs. to Thuc. and Finley to A. J. Woodman.

⁴⁹ Assmann 2002: 389 and 411. See also in general Griffiths 1960. ⁵⁰ Assmann 2002: 377–85.

⁵¹ For excellent recent discussions and presentations of these texts, see the papers in Blasius and Schipper 2002 – a volume that includes Koenen 2002 and Ryholt 2002. Note also Smith 1978/1993: 75–6.

Nectanebo,⁵² and the introduction to Manetho's own other Hyksos narrative, Hyksos II. In the *Alexander Romance*, the magician-pharaoh Nectanebo is informed by scouts that 'a great cloud' of barbarians from the East is on its way against Egypt (Ps.-Callisth. 1.2); when Nectanebo holds a mantic session in which he sees that the gods of Egypt are in fact steering the ships of the invaders, he realises that the end of Egyptian kingship is imminent, and he flees to Macedonia (1.3), there to father Alexander the Great (1.7); as for the Egyptians, they are told that 'the king who has fled as an old man will return as a youth' – Alexander will in fact be the 'new Nectanebo' (1.3 and 34). In the *Dream of Nectanebo*, the pharaoh Nectanebo II incubates in a temple and has a dream warning him to complete the inscription of a small chapel; he confers with a priest and prophet to determine the truth of the dream, and then calls an assembly of hieroglyphic carvers to find a suitable person to complete the carving; one Petesis volunteers, but gets sidetracked in his commission by the pleasures of life (wine and a woman). In the concluding sections (now lost) of the Greek version of this tale, it is likely that Petesis would have prophesied that, as he neglected his work, so Egypt would be neglected by the gods, and that the enemies of Egypt (the Persians) would conquer the land, evil would befall Egypt for a period of time, until the god sent a good king who would restore Ma'at.⁵³ A Demotic version of the *Dream* has been published recently, and it makes clear that Petesis dies after giving his prophecy, and that Nectanebo then turns his attention to making preparations to repel the invader – no doubt in vain.⁵⁴ Two *naoi* or small chapels have been found in the temple of Onuris at Sebennytus referred to in the *Dream*, both dedicated by Nectanebo II; significantly, as in the case of the one chapel in the *Dream* narrative, the hieroglyphic inscription on each is incomplete, probably left unfinished because of the invasion of Artaxerxes III.⁵⁵ It does not seem unreasonable to suppose that the tale of Nectanebo's dream sprang from these actual historical conditions.

Manetho's opening to Hyksos II contains many similar details. Josephus argues at *Ap.* 1.229–32 that Manetho introduced a fictional king into his king list in the years following the events of the Sethos and Harmais narrative discussed above. Josephus' suspicion of this narrative is remarkable and noteworthy: Manetho 'intruded Amenophis, an interpolated' or 'fictitious

⁵² For the thematic connections between the *Alexander Romance* and the *Dream of Nectanebo*, see Koenen 1985: 192–3.

⁵³ Koenen 1985: 185 and 191–2. ⁵⁴ Ryholt 1998a and 2002.

⁵⁵ Ryholt 2002: 240–1, with Tafel viii.

king' (τὸν Ἀμένωφιν εἰσποιήσας ἐμβόλιμον βασιλέα *Ap.* 1.232).⁵⁶ The first detail we learn is crucial:

... he [sc. Manetho] says that this king desired to be an observer of gods (τοῦτον ἐπιθυμῆσαι θεῶν γενέσθαι θεατὴν), just as Or, one of those who had been king before him, and he brought his wish to a man with the same name, Amenophis, whose father was Paapis; he had the reputation of possessing divine nature because of his wisdom and knowledge of future events (*Jos. Ap.* 1.232).

Amenophis the son of Paapis informs the pharaoh Amenophis that he could only fulfil his wish to see the gods if he cleansed Egypt of all the lepers and other unclean persons living in the land (*Ap.* 1.233); when the unclean lepers are punished by Amenophis with abandonment in the stone-quarries to the East of the Nile, it is they who, at the instigation of renegade leprous Egyptian priests, in particular Osarseph/Moses (*Ap.* 1.250), summon the Shepherds of Hyksos I (*Ap.* 1.241), a people who have been clearly identified as the Jews (*Ap.* 1.90–92) and who invaded Egypt earlier and were then permitted to settle in Judaea. But when the lepers are first punished, the seer Amenophis is overwhelmed with fear for himself that the maltreatment of the leprous priests will inspire the anger of the gods, and he predicts the coming of allies for the lepers (i.e. the Shepherds), who will join the unclean and take control of Egypt for a set period of time (thirteen years: *Ap.* 1.236). Indeed, it is essential to note that the bulk of Manetho's description of the events of Hyksos II comes in fact verbatim from his version of the prophecy of Amenophis son of Paapis (*Ap.* 1.237–50; n.b. κατὰ λέξιν οὕτως γέγραφεν 1.237) who, having delivered his vision of what is in store for Egypt and recorded it in writing, commits suicide (*Ap.* 1.236), just like the potter in the *Oracle of the Potter* (and cf. the deaths of the Lamb in the *Oracle of the Lamb* and Petesis in the *Dream of Nectanebo*). In other words, prophecy becomes historical narrative in Manetho's hands – a vitally important point which I will take up in a moment.

But to return to the opening of Hyksos II, Amenophis the king's desire to see the gods is the crucial tip-off that something is wrong with Egypt during his reign, much as παραδόξως alerted us to the real state of affairs in Hyksos I. The pharaoh was seen as the gods' representative on earth, the son of Amun Re (or alternatively Ptah or the Mendesian ram) and the embodiment of Horus (thus note the 'Or' (Horus) at the start of Hyksos II, who *could* see the gods); he was the only true priest of Egypt and

⁵⁶ The adjective ἐμβόλιμος is a *hapax* for Josephus. Cf. LSJ s.v. 3 for 'interpolated' and 'fictitious'. Josephus notes that a regnal length in years is missing for Amenophis (*Ap.* 1.230).

delegated his authority to others.⁵⁷ For him not to be able to see the gods, not to be in communion with them, implies that the gods have abandoned the Egypt of Amenophis the king. This makes his wish to see the gods the indicator that what follows, namely the humiliation of foreign rule at the hands of the Shepherds and lepers, is in fact the working out of a divine plan.⁵⁸ In the case of Hyksos II, both Assmann's deuteronomism and messianism are focused on Amenophis the king: he is responsible for the punishment of the unclean, which triggers the return of the Hyksos (deuteronomism), but he is also the one who rescues the sacred animals of Egypt's temples in advance of the invasion, and takes them to the south to wait out the required period of foreign domination and takes measures to protect the images of the gods (*Ap.* 1.243–7: messianism). This element was strictly speaking missing from the start of Hyksos I, where we see only the punishment of Egypt: Egypt is attacked in a most hostile fashion (ἐχθρότατα is a key term, denoting the activity of the typhonic minions of Seth),⁵⁹ and has to endure the particularly awful crime of the assault upon its sacred places and, by implication, its sacred images and animals.

But if the main themes of pharaonic deuteronomism and messianism are focused (naturally) on Amenophis the king in the episode, it is the way the text of Amenophis the seer's prophecy is deployed that provides the best insight into how Manetho creates historical narrative out of pre-existing prophetic materials. Braun has offered a crucial insight in this regard. He noted that Amenophis the king's behaviour after the removal of the lepers to the stone quarries and the arrival of their allies the Shepherds is fundamentally illogical. When told of the massing of Egypt's enemies in the Eastern Delta, the pharaoh first recalls the prophecy of Amenophis the son of Paapis (*Jos. Ap.* 1.243: τῆς παρὰ Ἀμενώφεως τοῦ Παάπιος μνηθεὶς προδηλώσεως), gathers a multitude of Egyptians and takes counsel with the leaders of the land (standard actions in the *Königsnovelle*). He collects the sacred animals of Egypt and takes measures to protect the sacred images of the temples (244). Sending away his five-year old son Sethos/Ramesses, he crosses the Nile with a force of 300,000 men, but does not join battle with the enemy 'because he did not think it right to fight the gods' (ὁλλὰ μὴ δεῖν θεομαχεῖν νομίσας 246).⁶⁰ Taking with him the Apis bull from Memphis (a central symbol of lawful kingship) as well as the rest of the sacred animals, Amenophis the king retreats to Ethiopia to wait out the

⁵⁷ Cf. e.g. Koenen 1993: 45 and 58, Assmann 2002: 184–8, Hölbl 2001: 88; for king as only priest, Winter 1978.

⁵⁸ Podemann Sørensen 1992: 166 and 168; Dillery 1999a: 107–8 and 2004. ⁵⁹ Cf. Koenen 1959.

⁶⁰ An important emendation here: Herwerden's μὴ δεῖν for μέλλειν, accepted by all editors.

13 years of predicted rule of the lepers and Shepherds (246–7). Braun very reasonably wondered why Amenophis the king bothered to marshal an army at all and march out against his enemies *after he had remembered* the prophecy of Amenophis the seer;⁶¹ recall that it is precisely this prophecy that permits the pharaoh to see that the invasion is ordained by the gods, and thus allows him to conclude later that resisting it would be ‘fighting against the gods’.

Braun pointed out that Nectanebo II’s actions at the start of the *Alexander Romance*, while similar in many regards, contrast sharply with those of Amenophis the king in Manetho’s Hyksos II narrative in one important way: right from the outset, Nectanebo ‘gave up all resistance’ because he saw that the gods had abandoned Egypt;⁶² there was no point to remaining to defend Egypt from the Persians. Manetho’s Amenophis wants precisely to commune with the gods as Nectanebo does, but cannot; instead he is advised to commit what turns out to be a religious crime, then is given a prophecy predicting his failure, which he temporarily seems to forget. Braun went his own way at this point, choosing to characterise the internal contradiction of Hyksos II as the result of Manetho’s merging of ‘history and romance’. That is as may be. But I do believe he was right to suspect ‘components’ of different literary traditions have been brought together in Manetho, whereby an original epiphany of the gods by Amenophis was ‘eliminated’, and the pharaoh’s initial plan to resist the invasion by force spun out to replace it, thus creating the internal contradiction.

What accounts for the oddity of Amenophis’ actions in Hyksos II is that Manetho has adapted what was originally a prophetic text to the writing of history. He did not want to, or simply could not provide Amenophis with an epiphany such as Nectanebo received through his magical practice in the *Alexander Romance*.⁶³ Devastation for Egypt still had to be explained by Manetho in terms of pharaonic ‘deuteronomism’, and so he had to have in his account the divine sanction of the prophesied events, and the events themselves. But Manetho also needed to make sense of Amenophis as a responsible military commander of Egypt. The history embedded in the prophetic narrative of Hyksos II had to be shorn of its religious setting and given an historiographic overlay. As he is presented in Manetho’s narrative, Amenophis responded as any ruler would to invasion; but his actions also make sense seen through the lens of Egyptian *Chaosbeschreibung*. I will note that Sethos acts in a similarly contradictory fashion in Herodotus (2.141.4).

⁶¹ Braun 1938: 21. ⁶² Braun 1938: 22.

⁶³ Cf. Braun 1938: 22, Manetho ‘has eliminated this epiphany, perhaps because it did not fit in with the beginning of the legend, or because it appeared to him as being too mythical’.

Why? Embedded historiography and Manetho

Beginning with the publication of James Mill's *The History of British India* (1819–23) and Hegel's *The Philosophy of History* (1837), it was argued by Western scholars that India did not possess historical writing because it did not possess historical consciousness.⁶⁴ Similar arguments have been made for other non-western, formerly colonial possessions, such as Sub-Saharan Africa.⁶⁵ These views have been strongly countered in recent decades. Romila Thapar in particular has argued that in fact a very powerful 'historical consciousness' can be seen in Indian literature from early on, 'embedded' in types of literature that do not correspond to traditional Western historiographic forms.⁶⁶ In essence, an 'embedded' historiography is also what Baines is arguing for in his article on Egypt from the same volume (2011) to which Thapar has contributed her most recent essay. But what then of Manetho, whom Baines did not want to include in his review of Egyptian historical practice? I would argue that Manetho did not in fact write 'embedded history', but himself 'disembedded' historical information that he found in the Egyptian narrative traditions he had to hand, such as the various textual forms that go to make up *Chaosbeschreibung*. The narrative 'tags' of Manetho's chronography, separately transmitted from Josephus, support this suggestion.⁶⁷ These texts Manetho would have had access to in his temple library. Papyri from one such library, much smaller than what would have been found at Manetho's Heliopolis and dating from the Roman period, have recently been studied with a view to trying to establish what the library's holdings would have been.⁶⁸

I believe that Manetho was in part inspired to 'disembed' these narratives after he had read the historical writing of Herodotus, and to a lesser extent, Hecataeus of Abdera on Egypt. Manetho would have learned much from Herodotus' treatment of, e.g., the story of Anysis, Sabacos and Sethos (Hdt. 2.137–41), one that also deals with dreams, the departure of pharaoh, and his return and restoration of Ma'at (Assmann's deuteronomism and messianism again).⁶⁹ Or, alternatively, the story of 'Heracles' and 'Zeus' at Hdt. 2.42, one that is compared by Reinach and Waddell to the start

⁶⁴ See Thapar 2011: 556–7.

⁶⁵ See Fuglestad 1992, responding to views expressed by Hugh Trevor-Roper ('The Trevor-Roper Trap').

⁶⁶ Most recently Thapar 2011; but note also Thapar 1993.

⁶⁷ So, most securely, the *Oracle of the Lamb*, referred to at Syncellus *Ecloga* 82 and 84 M ('a lamb spoke in the time of Bocchoris'), but also attested separately on a Demotic papyrus – P.Vienna D. 10,000: translation and discussion at Ritner 2003b.

⁶⁸ Tebtunis: Ryholt 2005b.

⁶⁹ Dillery 1999a: 104. For the *logos* of Anysis, Sabacos and Sethos: Lloyd 1975–1988: 3.90–105.

of Hyksos II and Amenophis' desire to 'see the gods' as Or had done.⁷⁰ Naturally, at the same time, Manetho's encounter with Herodotus in particular and his Greek tales of Egypt would have involved Manetho's own critique of Herodotus' narratives (recall that Josephus reports that Manetho revealed that Herodotus was often wrong on 'Egyptian matters'). There is evidence, again from the chronography of Manetho, that he reported on Helen's sojourn in Egypt – an important Homeric and Herodotean story.⁷¹

⁷⁰ Reinach 1930: 43 n. 4; Waddell 1940: 121 n. 3. Cf. Dillery 2004: 242–3.

⁷¹ Syncellus *Ecloga* 80–1 M: 'Thyris, the one called by Homer Polybus, husband of Alcandre, during whose reign Ilium was captured'. Cf. Homer *Od.* 4.126, Hdt. 2.112–20.

Imitatio Alexandri in *Egyptian literary tradition*

Kim Ryholt

Introduction

The focus of the present paper is *imitatio Alexandri* – i.e. the imitation of Alexander the Great – in historical narratives of the Greco-Roman period. A number of examples have been selected from different contexts. They relate to the legendary kings Sesostriis and Ramesses and characters from the cycle of Inaros stories. Little of the available material has previously been interpreted in this light and it will be shown that *imitatio Alexandri* was much more widespread than previously realised. This circumstance is likely to have been influenced by the extensive reference to Alexander the Great by the diadochs and later Hellenistic kings in their attempt to legitimise and strengthen their rule.

The association between Alexander and Egypt was particularly strong.¹ In his own lifetime, Alexander had been proclaimed the son of Ammon at Siwa. Perhaps also circulated on behalf of Alexander himself in relation to his conquest of the country is the claim that he was in reality the son of Nectanebo II, the last Egyptian ruler before the Persians.² In the wake of Alexander's death, Ptolemy I managed to secure or rather appropriate the corpse and bring it to Egypt, where the king was buried in the royal city of Memphis. Later, Ptolemy made the decision to relocate the royal residence specifically to Alexandria, which had been founded by Alexander, and the burial of the dead king was transferred to this site where also the cult of Alexander was instituted. Ptolemy further authored a biography of Alexander which has not survived but was the principal source for Arrian, and which undoubtedly emphasised his own role in relation to the success of Alexander. He also exploited aspects of the campaigns of Alexander and his personal association with the king in his royal ideology and propaganda, such as depicting himself on coins in a chariot drawn by elephants,³

¹ In general: Fraser 1972.

² Ryholt 2002: 234–6.

³ E.g. Goddio 2008: 351, no. 422.

thus commemorating the expedition to India where he was said to have saved Alexander's life. As a result of these circumstances, detailed accounts about the achievements of the Macedonian ruler became known in Egypt.

Imitatio is the deliberate modelling of various attributes or circumstances relating to one person on those of another. The phenomenon as such has a long tradition in Egypt. A well-known example is the imitation of various aspects of the reign of Ramesses II by Ramesses III, and numerous other instances from Ancient Egypt could be cited. In a broader context one might distinguish between *imitatio*, used in the narrow sense, where A seeks to imitate B; *aemulatio*, where A seeks to rival or surpass B; and *comparatio*, where A is being compared to B by a third party.⁴ Since the present study is concerned with literary tradition, every example of imitation is by the hands of a third party and might therefore in principle be classified as *comparatio*.

The present chapter presents some preliminary findings of a larger study of historical narratives from ancient Egypt. For reasons of space, a limited number of sources have been selected, and specific details, notes, and references have been kept to a minimum.

The legendary Sesostris and Scythia/India

We will first examine some examples relating to the legendary Sesostris – that is, the imaginary figure who in classical and Hellenistic literature rivals renowned figures such as Darius I and Alexander the Great, as opposed to the historical kings of the Middle Kingdom (1985–1773 BC) by the same name. The most complete account of the legendary Sesostris is provided by Herodotus in his account of Egypt dating to the mid-fifth century BC. His account includes the following passage (Hdt. 2.110):

Sesostris was the only Egyptian king who also ruled Ethiopia. To commemorate his name, he set before the temple of Hephaestus two stone statues of himself and his wife, each thirty cubits high, and statues of his four sons, each of twenty cubits. Long afterwards Darius the Persian would have set up his statue before these; but the priest of Hephaestus forbade him, saying that he had achieved nothing equal to the deeds of Sesostris the Egyptian; for Sesostris (he said) had subdued the Scythians, besides as many other nations as Darius had conquered, and Darius had not been able to overcome the Scythians; therefore it was not just that Darius should set his statue before

⁴ Green 1989: 193–4.

the statues of Sesostris, whose achievements he had not equalled. Darius, it is said, let the priest have his way.⁵

This is the *locus classicus* in relation to the Egyptian concept of *imitatio* and the only example that has really received much attention.⁶ The crux of the account is the Scythians whom the Persian king Darius (522–486 BC) – the greatest conqueror the world had yet witnessed – had failed to subjugate despite tremendous efforts. This represented Darius' greatest failure and, for that reason, the conquests of the renowned Sesostris were fictitiously extended to include this particular people so that the Egyptians may boast an even greater ruler of the past. The account by Herodotus is further important because it demonstrates that the *imitatio* device vis-à-vis a foreign model was employed already prior to Alexander the Great, here in the form of *imitatio Darii*, the imitation of Darius I. In actual fact no Egyptian king had ever campaigned against the Scythians. Moreover, Darius visited Egypt *before* his Scythian campaign, and the colossi in front of the temple in Memphis depicted Ramesses II rather than any Sesostris.⁷ The story is deliberately polemical, as is also shown by the contrasting designations 'Sesostris the Egyptian' vs. 'Darius the Persian'. There can be little doubt that it represents a purely literary tradition that sought (successfully)⁸ to promote the legendary Sesostris as the personification of a glorious Egyptian past.

Diodorus too provides an account of the deeds of Sesostris. Where Darius I had been *the* conqueror in the days of Herodotus, this role had been taken over by Alexander the Great by the time of Diodorus, and we see that the deeds of Sesostris reported by the latter have been updated accordingly. I cite only the relevant passage, Diodorus, *Library* 1.55.2–3:

... he [sc. Sesostris] sent out a fleet of four hundred ships into the Red Sea, being the first Egyptian to build warships, and not only took possession of the islands in those waters, but also subdued the coast of the mainland as far as India, while he himself made his way by land with his army and subdued all Asia. Not only did he, in fact, visit the territory which was afterwards won by Alexander of Macedon, but also certain peoples into whose country Alexander did not cross. For he even passed over the river Ganges and visited all of India as far as the ocean, as well as the tribes of the Scythians as far as the river Tanais, which divides Europe from Asia.⁹

⁵ Tr. Godley 1920: 398–9.

⁶ See especially Lloyd 1982: 39 on this passage.

⁷ Lloyd 1975–1988, vol. III: 35–7.

⁸ On the mediaeval continuation of the tradition, see Ivantchik 1995, 2005: 190–220.

⁹ Tr. Oldfather 1933: 192–3.

Diodorus' reference to Scythia puts it in a position of secondary importance. In the context of Alexander the Great, it was the failed conquest of India that was exploited in order to boast Egyptian superiority. Once again the claim is clear and explicit; what Alexander had failed to achieve, the legendary Sesostris had accomplished. In other words, the conquests of the Hellenistic Sesostris were fictitiously made to exceed those of Alexander, just as those of the Achaemenid Sesostris had been made to exceed those of Darius.

The *imitatio* in relation to Alexander the Great goes beyond the aspect of the domination of the civilised world. Alexander died in his thirty-third year and, according to some traditions, his expeditions lasted nine years.¹⁰ Both of these particular year specifications were also transferred onto the Sesostris tradition.¹¹ In the case of the thirty-three-year life-span of Alexander, this becomes the reign length of the legendary Sesostris rather than the length of his life (the Egyptians were little concerned with age). This tradition, preserved in Diodorus (*Library* 1.58.3), specifies that 'after a reign of thirty-three years he deliberately took his own life'.¹² Arguments for the historicity of this claim have proven unsuccessful.¹³ Once we take into account the literary tradition, the conclusion seems clear: Alexander's life ends in his thirty-third year, and hence Sesostris' life must also end in his thirty-third year. The notion of an Egyptian king committing suicide might seem surprising. However, there seems to be a clear logic here as well; Sesostris had to die at this specific stage of his life, in order to emulate Alexander, and as a *theios aner* no one else could kill him. Only he himself could take his life; he was not to suffer death due to enemy hands, illness, or old age.

It is telling that Herodotus' account of Sesostris – written, of course, before Alexander's birth – mentions neither India nor the nine years of conquest nor the thirty-three years of rule; this suggests that these features became part of the tradition only after the advent of Alexander.

The legendary Ramesses and Bactria

The tales of the renowned king Sesostris who had conquered more than Darius and Alexander the Great did not stand alone. Similar stories were

¹⁰ Pfister 1976: 43–4 (reprint of Pfister 1946).

¹¹ For the nine-year conquest, see Manetho fr. 34–36 (in Waddell 1940) and Diodorus 1.55.10. On Manetho and the interpretative problems he raises, see Dillery, this volume.

¹² Oldfather 1933: 202–5.

¹³ Sethe 1900: 23 argues that the thirty-three years represent the length of Sesostris' sole (as opposed to joint) rule; yet the Egyptians did not distinguish 'sole rule' from 'co-regency' (Ryholt 2004b: 150, on the Turin King-list, dating to the reign of Ramesses II (c. 1279–1213 BC)). Maspero 1901: 682 already challenges Sethe's literalism.

modelled on the legendary Ramesses. As with Sesostris, there is reason to believe that Ramesses was a composite figure based on several historical kings, above all Ramesses II and Ramesses III, whose accounts of victories and successful if violent imagery could still be seen in their temples in Thebes and elsewhere.¹⁴

Three of the sources that extol the exploits of the legendary Ramesses have in common that they specifically mention Bactria. None of the historical kings, of course, ever had anything to do with Bactria. Why, then, was Bactria singled out in this context? Bactria was special in two respects. It was one of the remotest locations that Alexander was able to conquer,¹⁵ and came to represent the extreme end of the known world. An echo of this circumstance is in the so-called *Adulis Inscription*,¹⁶ according to which Ptolemy III searched everywhere, all the way to Bactria, in order to retrieve the divine images that had been removed from Egypt. The remoteness of Bactria is further stressed by the *Bentresh Story* where the journey of an important mission from Egypt to Bactria took no less than 500 days each way (cf. below). Secondly, Bactria was associated with Alexander the Great through his marriage to Roxane who was the daughter of a Bactrian noble. Bactria was, in other words, intimately connected with the exploits of Alexander.

Let us first examine a passage in Tacitus' account of Germanicus' visit to Thebes in 19 AD which was written in the first half of the second century AD:¹⁷

Next [Germanicus] saw the great vestiges of ancient Thebes. On its massive masonry, in Egyptian script, remained testimonies of its prior opulence. One of the senior priests, requested to interpret the native tongue, told how the country had once possessed 700,000 men of military age, with whom King Ramesses had made his conquests. The tribute-list of the subject lands (they were Libya, Ethiopia, Media, Persia, Bactria, and Scythia; his empire also had included Syria, Armenia, and neighbouring Cappadocia, and had extended to the Bithynian and Lycian coasts) could be read – the weight of gold and silver was recorded, and the numbers of weapons and horses, the temple-offerings of ivory and spices, the quantities of grain and other materials contributed by every country: revenues as impressive as those exacted by Parthian compulsion or Roman imperial organization.¹⁸

¹⁴ Cf. Ryholt 2009a. ¹⁵ Holt 1988. ¹⁶ Bernand 1982: 184–6.

¹⁷ Discussions of the nature and purpose of Germanicus' visit to Egypt, which was subject to controversy already in antiquity, include Kákosy 1985–88, Hennig 1972, and Weingärtner 1969. The attribution of a number of cartouches in Egypt to Germanicus has more recently been shown to be incorrect by Dils 1994.

¹⁸ Tacitus, *Annals* 2.60.3; tr. Klotz 2008: 30.

It has been noted that all the tributary countries here cited can be found in the extensive lists of territories dominated by the Persian empire on monuments of Darius I from Egypt.¹⁹ However, the list is clearly no mere copy of any extant document. We are rather dealing with a deliberate selection of territories relevant in the specific context of the claim to former world domination. The territories attributed to Ramesses may be divided into three groups. Libya and Ethiopia are territories traditionally said to be dominated by Egypt. Media, Persia, Bactria, Scythia, and some of the other territories, were never conquered by Egypt but are included to match and surpass the conquests by Darius and Alexander. Finally, to avoid any possible misunderstanding of Egypt's former, unrivalled glory, the account concludes with an explicit comparison with the contemporary Parthian and Roman empires.

Two further aspects of Tacitus' account are noteworthy:

- First, how closely it matches the accounts concerning Sesostris preserved through Herodotus and Diodorus, the first of which was communicated half a millennium earlier.
- Second, the fact that this account, like the earlier ones, is explicitly ascribed to an Egyptian priest. The informant is explicitly said to be 'one of the senior priests' (*e senioribus sacerdotum*) and it would also be surprising if an exceptionally important visitor such as Germanicus would have had to suffice with a lesser individual. It can hardly be doubted that this was a high-ranking and *bona fide* priest.

The Bactrians are also mentioned earlier by Diodorus who cites a description (taken from Hecataeus' third-century *Aegyptiaca*) of the mortuary temple of Ramesses II ('Osymandyas'), the Ramesseum, in Thebes:

Beyond the pylon, he says, there is a peristyle more remarkable than the former one; in it there are all manner of reliefs depicting the war which the king waged against those Bactrians who had revolted; against these he had made a campaign with four hundred thousand foot-soldiers and twenty thousand cavalry, the whole army having been divided into four divisions, all of which were under the command of sons of the king.²⁰

In reality the reliefs in question depict the Battle of Qadesh (in the Levant) which took place in the early reign of Ramesses II.²¹ There is nothing in the inscriptions that could possibly give rise to a misunderstanding as to the location, nor is the exaggerated size of the army mentioned. Clearly

¹⁹ Klotz 2008: 31–3.

²⁰ *Library* 1.47.6.

²¹ Spalinger 2005: 209–34.

the native guides, the priests, had an agenda and knew something about major current and past political affairs.²²

The most detailed description of Ramesses in relation to Bactria is found in the much-discussed *Bentresh Story*. This Egyptian text is known from two large-scale monumental hieroglyphic versions. The better known is Stela Louvre C 214, which is often called the *Bentresh Stela* after the name of the possessed princess mentioned in the story, or the *Bakhtan Stela* after the name of her country.²³ The large stela measures 2.22 by 1.09m. and was found in the late 1820s at a small sanctuary located just outside the Great Karnak Temple. The other monument is a wall-inscription which was discovered dismantled and re-used at the Luxor Temple in the late 1970s.²⁴ It has not yet been published. According to preliminary reports, some thirty-five blocks survive, comprising about one-fifth of the text preserved on the stela. The blocks are believed to have been dismantled during the Middle Ages and to have been brought to Luxor from Karnak.

The text purports to relate to the reign of Ramesses II. However, while the language of the inscription is composed in Classical Egyptian and the monument imitates New Kingdom stelae inscribed with royal inscriptions, the text is quite out of the ordinary. It begins with a historical setting; we are informed that King Ramesses at some unspecified date went to Naharin, i.e. Mitanni, to collect tribute according to his annual custom, and that the prince of Bactria presented his eldest daughter to him. Ramesses found her very beautiful and brought her back to Egypt, where she was made his senior queen and given the name Nofrure.

There then follows the main story. In his twenty-third regnal year, a messenger from Bactria informs Ramesses that Bentresh, the sister of queen Nofrure, has fallen ill. An Egyptian sage, the royal scribe Thothemhab, is despatched to Bactria where he examines Bentresh. He finds that she is possessed by a spirit, returns home to Egypt, and reports to the king. The king turns to Chons-in-Thebes-Neferhotep (a form of the god Chons, son of Amun and Mut) for aid, and after an oracular consultation it is decided to despatch a divine image of Chons-who-Exercises-Authority (another form of Chons) to Bactria. There the god provides magical protection for Bentresh, and the spirit leaves her body in a peaceful manner. A celebration is held in honour of the god.

²² Similarly, Strabo 17.1.46 mentions Theban obelisks recording an empire extending 'as far as the Scythians and the Bactrians and the Indians and the present Ionia'; although no king is mentioned, the similar phrasing suggests the same source as Diodorus and Tacitus.

²³ Ed. Broze 1989; trans. Lichtheim 1973/1980: 90–4; Kitchen 1996: 113–16; Ritner 2003a: 361–6.

²⁴ Bell 1979: 25, 1986: 24; Bianchi 1991: 2–3; Ritner 2003a: 361, and forthcoming.

Lacking a potent deity of his own, the prince now decides to keep the divine image instead of returning it to Egypt. It remains in Bactria for a period of three years and nine months. (The figure has an obvious symbolic connotation, signalling an extensive period, with the plural three in the sense of ‘many’ for the years and three multiplied by three for the months.) The prince then has a dream where he sees the image flying to Egypt. He takes this as a warning and finally sends it back together with rich gifts and a proper escort. Upon the return, in the thirty-third regnal year of Ramesses, the gifts are divided between the shrines of Chons-in-Thebes-Neferhotep and Chons-who-Exercises-Authority, at whose temple the stela was set up. Thus the story concludes happily.

It was already recognised in 1883 that the text is pseudo-epigraphical.²⁵ The dating is a more complex question. Erman argued for orthographical parallels with the Satrap Stela of Ptolemy I, dated to 311 BC. Others have detected anti-Persian propaganda in it, and hence dated it to the First Persian Occupation (525–404 BC), but Erman’s date seems corroborated by the archaeological context. The stela was erected at the small sanctuary ‘Temple C’ located outside the Great Karnak Temple on its eastern side,²⁶ which seems to have been partly built with re-used material. Some of the blocks in question preserved the names of King Tuthmosis III of the 18th Dynasty, the high-priestesses Nitocris and Shepenwepet of the 26th Dynasty, and King Nephertites I of the 29th Dynasty. This would seem to indicate that the chapel was built some time after the reign of Nephertites I (399–393 BC).²⁷ Hence it is possible that both monuments were commissioned around the same time during the early Ptolemaic period.

The *raison d’être* for the story of Ramesses and Bactria has been subject to much discussion. Most commentators have argued (and I agree) that the composition was written by a local priesthood in order to promote Chons-who-Exercises-Authority.²⁸ This particular form (and function) of the god Chons is first attested in the Ramesside period and had a long history as a god of healing and protection.²⁹ The privileged position of the deity is

²⁵ Erman 1883.

²⁶ Rosellini 1833: 47–8 (cf. also Porter and Moss 1972: 254–5); recently identified as the sanctuary of Chons-who-Exercises-Authority by Thiers 2003: 593–7.

²⁷ The Luxor blocks have, moreover, now been dated to the reign of Ptolemy I by Robert Ritner (pers. comm. 17.5.2011; see further Ritner forthcoming).

²⁸ Lefebvre 1949: 223; cf. also Erman 1883: 59; Spalinger 1977–78: 11; Lichtheim 1973/1980: 5; Broze 1989: 79; Cannuyer 2001: 38.

²⁹ Klotz 2008: 130–5. The Egyptian form of this name is *Hnsw-p3-ir-shr*. There has been some discussion over the exact meaning of the term *ir-shr* (in later orthography written *ir-shy*). It seems

clearly demonstrated by the fact that it received enough royal patronage to have its own temple constructed, apart from the main Chons temple within the Great Karnak Temple, with a structure that has been identified as a sanatorium built against its side. Little of the temple now survives, but some recently published fragments of a gate dedicated by Ptolemy VIII shows that the royal patronage continued at least into the later second century BC.³⁰ The two monumental versions of the *Bentresh Story* testify to this patronage. Such monuments required substantial resources and were by no means commonplace. The monumental text sought to promote Chons-who-Exercises-Authority by its claim that it was to this deity, and none other, that the king turned when his own father-in-law, a foreign ruler far away, desperately needed help that no one else could provide. Thus the text proclaims two significant aspects of the god: his potency (extending in effect to the ends of the known world) and his royal patronage since ancient times. And not just any king would do as an example of its ancient royal patronage; the king selected was none less than the mighty Ramesses whose names and triumphs were still to be seen and read on temple walls all over Thebes – the king who, to the Egyptians, had rivalled even Alexander the Great in his accomplishments.

In addition to its primary function of enhancing the reputation of the deity, the text has several important sub-plots. It draws on three well-attested contemporary topoi: Egyptian superiority, *imitatio Alexandri* and divine images in involuntary exile. The crux of the text, so far as *imitatio Alexandri* goes, is the identity of the toponym *Bh̥tn*; this has been explained, correctly in my view, as an Egyptian writing of Bactria.³¹ In addition to the phonetic argument (*Bh̥tr* > *Bxtn*), the identification also suits the facts that Ramesses is explicitly associated with domination of Bactria in other late sources (as seen above) and that the toponym is now known to occur in other contemporary texts, including the Inaros Epic³² and a mythological narrative,³³ both from the Tebtunis Temple library.³⁴

This brings us back to the question: why Bactria? A closer reading of the text provides the answer. Bactria is not mentioned simply as a territory

to have been overlooked that it is quite well attested in contemporary legal documents with the sense of exercising authority or taking control of property, whether inanimate or living.

³⁰ Thiers 2003.

³¹ Edel 1975: 60 n. 9, 1976: 60; de Wit 1949, 1952; Vittmann 2004: 148–9; Klotz 2008: 32 n. 57; cf. also Posener 1934: 77–8, 1967–68: 346. Other scholars have taken it as a *hapax* (Gauthier 1925: 31–2; Loprieno 2000: 51–2, 2001: 81–4, 2003b: 49–50, 2006: 17), a garbled reading (Spalinger 1977–78; Kitchen 1999: 167–8), or even as referring to Ecbatana (de Rougé 1910: 287; Morschauser 1988: 221–2), but this city is rendered *H̥mtn*.

³² Vittmann 2004: 148–9. ³³ Kockelmann (forthcoming). ³⁴ Ryholt 2005a.

that provides tribute to pharaoh. We are specifically told that Ramesses married the daughter of a Bactrian prince. Such a specific construction can only represent another example of *imitatio Alexandri*: if Alexander the Great had married the daughter of a Bactrian noble (Roxane, the daughter of Oxyartes), then so too had the legendary Ramesses. Again further poetic licence was employed to ensure that Ramesses' deed would overshadow that of Alexander. Accordingly, the Bactrian wife of Ramesses was said to be the daughter of a prince, rather than a noble, and she was presented as tribute. Moreover, it is hardly a coincidence that the end date of the story, regnal year 33, corresponds exactly to the age when Alexander the Great died. The significance of this figure has already been discussed above in relation to Sesostris. By placing the beginning of the *Bentresh Story* in regnal year 23 and having it complete by regnal year 33, moreover, Ramesses is made to surpass Alexander by accomplishing the same at a much earlier date. (As in the case of Sesostris, the Alexander figure refers to age while the Egyptian figure refers to reign.)

The additional topoi of Egyptian superiority and divine images in involuntary exile were also mentioned above. Since they are also relevant to the nature of the *Bentresh Story*, they deserve a few remarks which I will keep deliberately short.

Superiority: Egypt is represented as superior on all levels of intelligent existence: god, king and man, corresponding to the concepts *nTr*, *nsw* and *rmt*. The Egyptian king (represented by Ramesses) is portrayed as the world ruler to whom all pay tribute, while the Egyptian sage (represented by Thothemhab) is smarter and the Egyptian deity (represented by Chons-who-Exercises-Authority) more potent than anything the outside world has to offer.

Divine images in involuntary exile: this topos is encountered in many texts from Late Period and Greco-Roman Egypt.³⁵ It was rooted in a great national trauma initially caused by the large-scale abduction of divine images from Egypt in connection with the Assyrian and Persian occupations of the country. The present example provides an interesting variation of the theme where the god is actually sent abroad voluntarily, but then retained by the foreign ruler.

Alternative interpretations

There have been many other interpretations of the *Bentresh Story*. Several of them have in common that they regard the text as political propaganda

³⁵ Winnicki 1994.

for or against a specific regime. In this connection, it has mainly been regarded as anti-Persian propaganda dating to the First Persian Occupation (525–404 BC), on the assumption that the prince of *Bhṭn* in reality is a reference to the Persian ruler.³⁶ Several objections may be raised. It remains unexplained exactly who would dare set up a subversive piece of propaganda in monumental form right in the heart of one of the major religious centres in Egypt for all to see. The fact that the story never once mentions Persia or Persians and that it is set in a time far in the past inevitably raises the question of decoding and message. If the propaganda was so thinly disguised that anyone could easily decode it, then why substitute any of the elements? And what exactly is the message? Apart from the fact that the prince retains the divine image of the deity who has saved his daughter, because he clearly is in want of a potent idol of his own, he is described as a loyal vassal who recognises Egyptian superiority and pays his tribute, and he eventually returns the idol without any punishment. Even more importantly, the interpretation is contradicted by the story itself, according to which the great Ramesses is willing to accept the daughter of the foreign ruler as his wife and hence to accept the prince as his father-in-law and engage in the political alliance which this implies. It is especially significant that the foreign princess is presented as Ramesses' *senior* queen which the Hittite queen of Ramesses II was not. This fundamental change makes excellent sense in the context of *imitatio Alexandri*, since Roxane was Alexander's principal wife in contrast to the Hittite wife of Ramesses, but none at all in a context of anti-Persian propaganda. Moreover, the offspring of a senior queen would have priority as far as royal succession is concerned. This is a crucial point since it seems an exceedingly unlikely scenario that an anti-Persian work of propaganda should elevate the status of the foreign princess in a manner that would imply that the descendants of the great Ramesses were in fact half-Persian. Surely that would defeat the supposed purpose.

The text has also been seen as *pro*-Persian propaganda with the argument that it concerns 'a pharaoh whose name is part Ramesses II and part Tuthmosis IV, but behind whom is easily recognisable the Persian Darius as "renewer" of Egyptian temple piety'.³⁷ But why would Darius, as a renewer of temple piety, give the credit to the long-dead Ramesses II and disguise his own identity?

Another reading sees the text as propaganda in favour of Ptolemy V on the occasion of his marriage to Cleopatra I, the daughter of the Seleucid

³⁶ Burkard 1994: 54.

³⁷ Loprieno 2003a: 151.

king Antiochus III.³⁸ According to this interpretation, the identities of Tuthmosis IV and Ramesses II were deliberately merged because they were both known to have married foreign princesses, and Ptolemy V somehow sought to compare himself to these two ancient predecessors. Yet if the text was intended as royal propaganda celebrating the politically important marriage, then why entirely suppress the names of all the actual parties involved? The marriage between Ptolemy V and Cleopatra I was a political triumph because it represented a treaty between the rivalling Ptolemaic and Seleucid kingdoms, but who would be able to recognise the political achievement once all the names had been disguised and what could possibly be gained by adopting such an unusual approach rather than a plain public announcement?³⁹

Legitimizing devices

The authors of the *Bentresh Story* went to some length to compose a text that would read as a genuine account of a remarkable event from the reign of the legendary king Ramesses. Propaganda, both past and present, that seeks to promote something that is partly or entirely fictitious often shrouds this fact in accurate details. The same is true in the case of the *Bentresh Story*. In order to provide an appropriate historical setting, the authors took recourse to ancient royal inscriptions that would help to ensure the proper historical phraseology. Two sources seem to have been used, and both are likely to have been located within Karnak in the near vicinity of the priesthood of Chons-who-Exercises-Authority.

One is readily identified. This is the well-attested historical inscription describing the first Hittite marriage of Ramesses II.⁴⁰ At least two copies of this text have been found at Karnak, but there may well have been other copies. This inscription was used for the phraseology concerning the marriage between Ramesses and the Bactrian princess. A second text will have

³⁸ Donadoni 1957.

³⁹ Other alternative explanations: the narrative base is a now lost story about Ramesses II's marriage to a Hittite princess (Breasted 1906: 189–90); it represents a garbled version of a lost historical inscription relating an incident known from the royal correspondence between Ramesses II and the Hittite court (Edel 1976: 59–63; cf. also Cannuyer 2001: 37–43 who attempts to identify Thothemhab with the owner of Theban Tomb 194); or that it celebrates Egyptian medical skill (Burkard 1994: 52). Despite what many scholars imply (Morschauser 1998: 204; Kammerzell 1995: 956; Cannuyer 2001: 37), Thothemhab is nowhere described as a physician. The text has also been described as a *Königsnovelle* (Loprieno 1996c: 283, 284 n.41, 286, 288 n.59; Morschauser 1998: 209), but this term is imprecise (and the text does not fit the more precise definition, Jansen-Winkeln (1993)); what is more, the scholar who coined the phrase specifically excluded the Bentresh story (Hermann 1938: 21–2).

⁴⁰ Kitchen 1979: 233–57, 1996: 113–16.

been the source of the royal titulary of Tuthmosis IV and presumably also the phraseology concerning the king's expedition to the Levant to collect tribute and the mention of Mitanni (an anachronism, in historical terms).⁴¹ This text cannot be identified with any extant monument, but Karnak or Luxor (where Tuthmosis IV built extensively)⁴² is a good candidate.

The name and title of Thothemhab are both attested in the New Kingdom.⁴³ However, an official is unlikely to have been named in a royal inscription. Moreover, since he was a royal emissary it would be an obvious choice to refer to the protagonist of the *Bentresh Story* as a royal scribe, and as a sage it would be equally appropriate that he should carry a name (and a common one at that) which refers to Thoth, the god of wisdom.

The clever use of historical inscriptions has led several modern scholars to believe that the text represents a corrupted or deliberately masked record of actual political historical events – a record that can be decoded into revealing some underlying truth by substituting the key-words; e.g. change Bactria into Hatti or Persia, or Ramesses into Darius or Ptolemy V. It is difficult to accept this approach, especially since it requires a substitution or emendation of the key elements. The text does what so much other fiction does: it uses small details of historical information as a setting for the story. But it is no more historical literature than, say, Sherlock Holmes. There is nothing factual or historical in this story besides mere onomastic material – personal names and toponyms – and these relatively few details, for their part, represent an anachronistic and imprecise *pot pourri*.

- The five royal names inscribed at the very beginning of the text represent a conflation of the names of Tuthmosis IV (c. 1400–1390 BC) and Ramesses II (c. 1279–1213 BC); the first three names of the royal titulary belong to the former, and the last two to the latter. The rest of the inscription refers only to the names of Ramesses.
- Ramesses II is said to be campaigning in Naharin, sc. Mitanni which was no longer a political factor by the time of his reign. The toponym was presumably derived from a royal inscription from the reign of Tuthmosis IV. Significantly, it is misspelled, presumably because it was long since defunct and hence unknown to the scribe.⁴⁴
- Even more anachronistic is the fact that Ramesses II receives tribute from Bactria, which only became an important political entity many centuries later.

⁴¹ Bryan 1991: 118–19. ⁴² Bryan 1991: 167–88.

⁴³ Cannuyer 2001 argues that he was historical.

⁴⁴ Instead of the historical form *nhrn*, it is written in an orthography which may either be read as *nhrm* or as *nhr* with water being used as a determinative.

- Ramesses II's marriage to the Bactrian princess is evidently modelled on the historical marriage to a Hittite princess mentioned above; one line of the inscription is almost a direct copy and the name of the princess is identical. There are, however, certain significant changes. (1) The name has been shortened from *M33.t-Hr Nfrw-R'* to simply *Nfrw-R'*.⁴⁵ The scribe in question seems to have been aware that the initial part of the historical name, *M33.t-Hr*, was not a name proper but in fact an ancient queenly title meaning 'She who sees Horus' (in use during the 1st and 3rd Dynasties, but attested as late as the Ptolemaic period).⁴⁶ (2) The nationality of the princess and her father is changed from Hittite to Bactrian. (3) The year of the wedding is changed from year 34 to year 23. (4) The status of the princess is elevated to 'eldest daughter'. (5) The status of the princess as queen is elevated to 'senior queen'. This last point reflects the historical status of Roxane. Whether she was also the eldest daughter of her father is not clear.

With so few historical details, and the *imitatio Alexandri*, it must be concluded that the story represents fiction, albeit fiction with a clear purpose.

The Inaros Cycle/Petechons and the Amazons

The most comprehensive group of directly related narratives preserved to us from Greco-Roman Egypt is the cycle of Inaros stories.⁴⁷ These stories centre around the historical prince Inaros (I) of Athribis who became famous for his rebellion against the Assyrians in the 660s BC.⁴⁸ Some of the stories take place during his own lifetime, while others take place after his death and concern members of his clan, several of whom are also known historical figures. At the same time there is an element of confusion between Inaros I and his later namesake, Inaros II, who rebelled against the Persians. Thus, for instance, the Assyrian king Esarhaddon swears by the Persian god Ahura Mazda, and it is sometimes explicitly said that Inaros fights Persians instead of Assyrians. This confusion was presumably further fuelled by the *imitatio* of Alexander the Great whose main rival was indeed the Persians.

The main story about the exploits of Inaros is the long Inaros Epic.⁴⁹ It is preserved in at least four manuscripts, unfortunately all very poorly preserved and broken into numerous small fragments. Since the text has not yet been edited and only sections of it provide coherent narrative, I

⁴⁵ The name has frequently been misinterpreted, mostly as *M33t-nfrw-r'* or *M33t-nfrw-hr-r'*. The correct reading is noted by Edel 1994: 257 n. 221; cf. already Gardiner 1948: 23a n. 2a.

⁴⁶ Cf. Troy 1986: 189. ⁴⁷ Ryholt 2010: 714–15.

⁴⁸ Ryholt 2004a; Quack 2006. ⁴⁹ Ryholt 2004a: 492–5.

shall be very brief about it and offer comments on only a few points of relevance. Most conspicuous in the context of *imitatio Alexandri* is the fact that the story mentions Gaugamela which was the site of the third and final victory of Alexander the Great over Darius III in 331 BC. Unfortunately the toponym only survives on a small fragment and hence the immediate context of its mention is broken.⁵⁰ Gaugamela was located near Nineveh, the capital of the Assyrian empire, which is also mentioned several times in the text. More significantly, Inaros is said to have conquered Ecbatana, the summer residence of the Persian kings where Alexander collected his treasures after his defeat of Darius. The Egyptians had never historically been involved with Gaugamela or Ecbatana in any way, and it seems likely that the role of these two cities in the Inaros Epic was, again, modelled on the accounts of Alexander's triumphs which spread throughout his empire.

The Inaros Story that offers the greatest potential for comparison with the legends surrounding Alexander the Great is the story of *Petechnon and Sarpot* (also known as *Egyptians and Amazons*). The text is incompletely preserved in two Demotic papyri from the Fayum which can be dated to the second century AD.⁵¹ The better of the two manuscripts consists of fragments of twelve columns. No more than a third of the original text of these columns remains intact. How many columns are entirely lost cannot be estimated.

The main protagonist in the story is the Egyptian prince Petechnon who is also known from several other Inaros stories, above all the *Contest for Inaros' Armour*,⁵² the *Contest for the Benefice of Amun*⁵³ and the *Contest for Inaros' Diadem and Lance*.⁵⁴ He is portrayed as a mighty warrior and as the son of Inaros' closest ally Pektur. The latter was a historical ruler of Pisopd in the eastern Delta and one of the most influential leaders in Egypt in his time; as such he is mentioned both in the annals of the Assyrian king Esarhaddon and on a stela of the Kushite king Tanutamani.⁵⁵

The main theme of *Petechnon and Sarpot* is the meeting between Petechnon and the Amazon queen Sarpot with whom he becomes intimate. The first editor of the text, Volten, saw here a connection with the battle

⁵⁰ The fragment in question is published by Tait 1977: 1–14, pl. 1. Note that the join between the small fragment in which Gaugamela is mentioned (fr. 3, ll. 28–33) and the larger fragment (fr. 1, ll. 1–28) remains quite doubtful. I have discovered further parts of the manuscript in Copenhagen and Berkeley that join the large fragment directly.

⁵¹ Ed. Volten 1962; Hoffmann 1995; tr. Hoffmann and Quack 2007: 107–17; many new readings in Ryholt (forthcoming); translations below are based on my own collation of the original.

⁵² Hoffmann and Quack 2007: 59–87; Ryholt 2012: 73–88.

⁵³ Hoffmann and Quack 2007: 88–107. ⁵⁴ Ryholt 2012: 89–102. ⁵⁵ Ryholt 2004a: 487–8.

of Achilles against the Amazon Queen Penthesilea.⁵⁶ This comparison was rejected by Hoffmann in his re-edition of the text with reference to the fact that Achilles only falls in love with Penthesilea after he has killed her, and he proceeds to deny any Greek influence on the Egyptian story.⁵⁷ Students of the text generally seem to have been unaware of the rich tradition about Alexander's encounter with the Amazons,⁵⁸ an episode recounted by all the biographers of Alexander the Great.⁵⁹ Even with the very incomplete preservation of the Egyptian text, there are striking similarities between Alexander's and Peteichons' encounters with the Amazons and their queen, and it is evident that the story of *Peteichons and Sarpot* is closely modelled on the account of Alexander the Great. The main points may be summed up as follows:

1. Alexander and Peteichons encounter the queen of the Amazons.
 2. The land of the Amazon people borders India.
 3. The Amazon queen is a mighty warrior like Alexander and Peteichons.
 4. Alexander and Peteichons become intimate with the Amazon queen.
 5. The Amazon queen offers tribute and places a large force at the disposal of Alexander and Peteichons.
 6. Alexander and Peteichons proceed to India.
 7. Alexander and Peteichons suffer problems with their troops in relation to the combat against the Indians.
- at this point the Egyptian manuscript breaks off and the rest is lost.

It is unclear why the Amazons are mentioned in the historical accounts of Alexander the Great, but not only are they mentioned, they do in fact feature in most of the main sources.⁶⁰ Modern scholarship has made various attempts to account for their presence by proposing that they are a reflection of a historical people or a specific historical situation, but Baynham is likely to be much closer to the point when she concludes that 'Both Heracles and Achilles had had encounters with Amazons; therefore Alexander must have one.'⁶¹ In other words, we are dealing with an example of *imitatio*. And, just as Alexander must have had an encounter with the Amazons because of Heracles and Achilles, so must an Egyptian hero because of Alexander. In the text under discussion, Peteichons – the son of Inaros' closest ally Pektur – was selected. Why Peteichons was chosen rather than Inaros himself is not

⁵⁶ Volten 1956: 150. ⁵⁷ Hoffmann 1995: 23.

⁵⁸ An exception is Almásy 2007. ⁵⁹ Baynham 2001.

⁶⁰ Plutarch claims that the stories go back to the first-generation historians, including Cleitarchus of Alexandria, Polycleitus of Laris and Onesicritus, but voices scepticism as to the historicity (*Alex.* 46.1; Baynham 2001: 118). Arrian too voices doubts (*Anabasis of Alexander* 7.13.2-6; McNerney 2007: 426).

⁶¹ Baynham 2001: 122.

clear, but perhaps not very significant either. The main point was to create an Egyptian hero whose deeds equalled or even surpassed those for which Alexander would later become famous.

The favourable status of Sarpot, the Amazon queen in the Egyptian story, is shown by the fact that her name is consistently written without the so-called foreign determinative, which normally marks foreign people. Quite to the contrary, and significantly, the name is often terminated by the Egyptian royal cartouche and the royal epithet granting 'life, health and prosperity' (*nh wdj snb*) which is quite exceptional in relation to foreign rulers.⁶² It is, moreover, possible that the Egyptian name for the Amazon queen *Sarpot*, meaning 'lotus', was inspired by the name found in most of the Greek versions, Thalestris or Thalestria. The word *sarpot* is not otherwise attested as a personal name; it is unique to the story of *Petechnon and Sarpot* and therefore demands an explanation.⁶³ One possibility is that the Greek name may have been thought to derive, whether correctly or not, from the verb θάλλω, 'bloom', regularly used of plants. If this is how the author of the Egyptian story understood the name, the name *Sarpot* may be regarded as an *interpretatio aegyptiaca*. In other words, the Amazon queen would have been named after the Egyptian lotus which, in a native context, would similarly conjure up the image of a beautiful woman, a woman in bloom.

Like Alexander, Petechnon experienced problems with his troops in relation to his expedition to India. However, the author has – as in so many other cases of *imitatio* – used poetic licence and slightly altered the situation. Petechnon has apparently left his troops without saying where he is going, with disastrous consequences. In his own words to the Amazon queen: 'I did not let them discover where I went. They became frightened and they went away . . . If my youths do not return to me, it is bad!' (Ms A, col. 2, lines x+23ff). Petechnon is deeply troubled. At this point Sarpot attempts to cheer him up and reminds him, through two rhetorically phrased questions, of his great success so far: 'Was it not in order to make the Land of the Women into a vassal that you came here with your army? Did I not hand over to you the army of the Land of the Women that they might serve you and bring tribute to you?' In other words, he came to subjugate her country and she has now put her troops at his disposal. She concludes her speech by explicitly stating her loyalty to him, promising

⁶² The epithet is not marked in the re-edition, but is noted in the original edition and in *Demot. Nb.* I 934. It is noteworthy that in one case (column 3, line 1), the scribe even added the cartouche and epithet secondarily when he collated the text and found it missing.

⁶³ Zauzich 2010: 448–9 seeks to derive the name Sarpot from Semiramis (*sammuramat*).

that her troops will follow or serve him wherever he will go (Ms A, col. 2, lines x+27ff).

The reference to tribute and providing of soldiers is noteworthy since it is related specifically to the *Alexander Romance* (3.25–6), where the queen of the Amazons offers to pay a rich tribute (100 talents of gold) and to place a large force (500 warriors and 100 horses) at Alexander's disposal. This stands in contrast to the main historical accounts.⁶⁴

A further example of Greek influence is the reference to Osiris as 'Osiris the great Agathodaimon of India' (*wsir p3 šy '3 n hntw*).⁶⁵ As Vittmann (1998: 67) has pointed out, this reference reflects the notion of Osiris, the culture hero, who went to India; cf. Diodorus 1.27.3–6 and also 1.19.7–8 where we find the following description:

He (i.e. Osiris) also founded not a few cities in India, one of which he named Nysa, wishing to leave there a memorial of that city in Egypt where he had been reared. . . . And many other signs of his stay he left in that country, which have led the Indians of a later time to lay claim to the god and say that he was by birth a native of India.⁶⁶

This again touches upon the phenomenon of *imitatio*. It has long been recognised that Diodorus' account of King Osiris is an Egyptian adaption of a Greek Dionysus legend.⁶⁷ Moreover, Nock has argued that Dionysus' expedition to India was actually based on Alexander's exploits and the scepticism is not new.⁶⁸ Thus, for instance, already Strabo (*Geogr.* 11.5.5) and Arrian (*Anabasis* 5.1.1–2) expressed their doubt concerning the veracity of the story according to which Dionysus had already accomplished what Alexander would later achieve. This means that the notion of Osiris as a culture hero who travelled as far as India becomes an indirect *imitatio Alexandri*; Osiris' deeds are based on those of Dionysus which, in turn, are based on those of Alexander the Great.

The influence of Greek literature on *Petechnos and Sarpot* also reveals itself in another manner that has hitherto been overlooked. The narrative is introduced by a kind of table of contents. This in itself is rare and the only comparable example from a contemporary Egyptian context is the *Myth of the Sun's Eye*.⁶⁹ Moreover, the table is drawn up in a manner that imitates contemporary Greek literary works. Thus, for instance, Diodorus

⁶⁴ Cf. Baynham 2001: 123.

⁶⁵ Osiris is also attested in relation to India in a recently studied mythological narrative from the Tebtunis Temple library: Kockelmann (forthcoming).

⁶⁶ Tr. Oldfather 1933.

⁶⁷ Griffiths 1948.

⁶⁸ Nock 1928a: 21–30.

⁶⁹ De Cenival 1989; see West, this volume.

introduces the topics that are dealt with in the individual books of his *Library of History* with either Περί... , 'On (such-and-such a theme)', or Ὡς... , 'How (such-and-such an event took place)'. It is the latter construction that is of interest to us here.

A relevant example from Diodorus is Ὡς Θάληστρις ἡ τῶν Ἀμαζονίδων βασιλεῦσσαν συνέμιξεν Ἀλεξάνδρῳ, 'How Thalestris queen of the Amazons had relations with Alexander' (17.1.37). Egyptian cannot express the conjunction 'how' in this manner and instead paraphrases a clause such as 'how NN travelled' with 'the manner of travelling which NN did'. It is precisely this construction that is used repeatedly in the introduction to *Petechons and Sarpot*. Moreover, one of the topics listed in the very damaged table of contents reads 'How he found his sister...' (Ms A, col. 1, line x+10). Unfortunately the remaining part of this episode description is lost, but the use of the noun 'sister', which is frequently used in the sense of 'beloved', is enough to show that a similar relationship between the Egyptian protagonist Petechons and the queen of the Amazons Sarpot was implied.⁷⁰ One may also compare the only other episode description of which more than a few words survive, 'How he went to Nineveh' (Ms A, col. 1, line x+9), with such an entry as Ὡς διαβάς εἰς Ἀσίαν... , 'How he crossed into Asia...' (Diod. *Library* 17, Contents of Part I).

Whether the list of contents in *Petechons and Sarpot* formed an independent table or whether it was embedded into the narrative itself needs consideration. The literary device of a story within a story was very prominent in Egypt and dates back to the earliest manuscript literature.⁷¹ In view of the few fragmentary passages preceding the lines here under discussion, it is my impression that the contents of the narrative are being read aloud by a person about to recount the exploits of Petechons to a third party, perhaps pharaoh himself. Whatever the exact formal nature of the list, it serves the same function: to inform the reader about the main episodes of the story of *Petechons and Sarpot*.

In the latest edition of *Petechons and Sarpot*, it was argued that 'griechischer Einfluß auf die demotische Sarpoterzählung unwahrscheinlich ist'.⁷² I would disagree and argue that the aspects here singled out for discussion reveal at least two tangible examples of Greek influence, i.e. the *imitatio* in relation to Alexander the Great (sc. Petechons' encounter with the Amazon queen and his expedition to India) and Dionysus (sc. Osiris as 'the great Agathodaimon of India'), both adapted from Greek

⁷⁰ It may further be noted that another entry ends with the word 'love' (*mr*).

⁷¹ Suhr 1999; Tait (forthcoming). ⁷² Hoffmann 1995: 29.

literary tradition. Moreover, it seems likely that the table of contents was also inspired by Greek literature. There may have been yet further points of Greek influence, but the deplorable preservation of the story does not allow for anything near a complete evaluation.

Concluding remarks

I hope to have provided some relatively clear examples of *imitatio Alexandri* in the Egyptian literary tradition and to have demonstrated some of the extent to which it was employed. In the nature of the *imitatio* we are dealing with the adaption and borrowing of motifs and, as some of the examples show, there is free use of poetic licence. Moreover, the *imitatio* sometimes occurs in contexts where it was secondary to the main purpose of the text, such as the *Bentresh Story*. As for the social context of the *imitatio Alexandri* (and the *imitatio Darii*), I should like to stress the fact that all the sources here discussed in one way or another relate to Egyptian priestly communities; the accounts reported by Herodotus, Diodorus, Strabo, and Tacitus, are all attributed to priestly sources, whereas the Demotic manuscript literature here discussed derives from temples in the Fayum, and the two monumental versions of the *Bentresh Story* were both set up at a temple in Thebes. It may be well to keep this congruence in mind in the ongoing debate on whether Herodotus and other visitors to Egypt *really* heard this or that from priestly sources.

Divine anger management
The Greek version of the Myth of the Sun's Eye
 (P.Lond.Lit. 192)

Stephanie West

Few texts more clearly demonstrate the potential for cross-cultural transfers in the narrative traditions of the ancient Levant than the Greek translation of the complex and often perplexing Demotic text conventionally known as the *Myth of the Sun's Eye*. The Greek version is sufficiently well preserved to allow us to form some idea of the translator's principles. This product of Roman Egypt includes two of the best known of the fables conventionally ascribed to Aesop, one of which can be traced back to Mesopotamia. This hospitable *Rahmenerzählung* allows a glimpse of the lively Levantine traffic in narrative themes and motifs which we often suspect but can seldom document.

The mythological background is the withdrawal to Nubia (i.e. the Sudan) of Tefnut, the daughter of the sun-god Re; she and her brother-husband Shu became 'Eyes of Re', and in these roles commonly took the heads of lioness and lion respectively.¹ The myth is most probably to be understood by reference to natural phenomena associated with the heliacal rising of Sirius after its period of invisibility, an event intimately connected with the beginning of the inundation. Tefnut is thus identified with Sirius (Egyptian Sothis); the Sun's meeting with his daughter fittingly expresses the star's heliacal rising.² The narrative concerns the mission of Thoth to induce her to return, and thus forms a frame for a discourse in which animal fables lead to ethical and theological reflections as Thoth placates and instructs the volatile, and potentially dangerous, goddess. It should be emphasised that this is a religious text, though there has been a tendency to exaggerate the importance of the fables,³ no doubt because they are much more easily intelligible; even where they are lacunose, we have a good idea of the sense.

¹ On the myth, see further Smith 1984. ² See further, Quack 2002.

³ Quack (Hoffmann and Quack 2007: 195–6) energetically protests against this misconception; see also von Lieven 2005: 58–9; 2009.

The Greek text is not a new discovery; it has been known since 1923, when it was published by Reitzenstein,⁴ who recognised in what Kenyon had described as ‘fragments of a literary work, unidentified, apparently a romance’⁵ a Greek version of the Demotic text published by Spiegelberg from a Leiden papyrus (*P.Leid.Dem.* 1.384), dated to the second century CE and said to come from Thebes, under the title of *Der ägyptische Mythos vom Sonnenauge*.⁶ H. J. Milne published a few revised readings of the Greek text and a photo of a substantial fragment in his *Catalogue of the Literary Papyri in the British Museum*.⁷ Its provenance is unknown; it is written in a small, neat literary hand, which Milne dated to the third century CE. The column, c. 70 lines, is unusually tall. This was certainly produced by a professional scribe; we are not dealing with the work of an individual enthusiast. It is quite uncertain how much older the translation is than this copy.

On re-examining the papyrus more than forty years ago I was able to establish the column length and make some further improvements; though I had to rely on others’ kindness for guidance over the Demotic original, it seemed better to publish a revised text than a series of piecemeal notes,⁸ and this was subsequently included in Totti’s *Ausgewählte Texte der Isis- und Sarapis-Religion* (1985: No. 76).⁹ It might now be possible to improve on some doubtful readings in the light of better understanding of the Demotic original (on which see further below).

For various reasons this text tends to be overlooked. First, it is not really intelligible without reference to the much more extensive (and often puzzling) Demotic original, of which there is no complete English translation.¹⁰ Second, it is not easily classifiable. Reitzenstein believed it to be relevant to the development of the Greek romance. This is how it is presented (though with some misgivings) in an excellent brief discussion by Rattenbury,¹¹ and it is classified under the heading ‘Romance’ in Pack’s *Catalogue*. But this classification immediately raises the question of what we are to understand by ‘romance’; this is clearly not a narrative of ἑρωτικὸν πάθος. It did not

⁴ Reitzenstein 1923.

⁵ Kenyon 1898: xxvi. Kenyon offered a couple of sentences as a sample, from the last intelligible fragment (F 11, 62–70); Reitzenstein’s identification is impressive.

⁶ *P.Leid.Dem.* 1.384; Spiegelberg 1917, not superseded by de Cenival 1988, on which see Smith 1992.

⁷ Milne 1927: 157, *P.Lond.Lit.* 192; plate xii; Pack³ 2618. ⁸ S. West 1969.

⁹ Good photos are included in the re-publication of the text by López Martínez and Torallas Tovar 2004–5; but their text suffers from systematic printing mistakes and fails to mark doubtful letters as such.

¹⁰ For a German translation with a very helpful introduction, bibliography and notes, see Hoffmann and Quack 2007: 195–229, 356–60. See also Loprieno 1995 (esp. 1038–46); Quack 2009: 147–60.

¹¹ Rattenbury 1933: 226–30.

qualify for inclusion in Stephens' and Winkler's collection of fragments of Greek novels, as being no more relevant than Aesop's fables to the discussion of the novel.¹² Perhaps more surprisingly, it was omitted from Manteuffel's collection of Graeco-Egyptian literature.¹³ Such problems of classification are to be expected at what we might call the interface of Greek and Near Eastern cultures; indeed, these challenges to our ideas of literary categories go far to explain the fascination of such studies. In this case, however, the Demoticists appear equally perplexed. Our evidence for Egyptian myths is overwhelmingly pictorial, not textual; the myth with which we are here concerned had been reconstructed from depictions on temple walls before the discovery of the Leiden papyrus. Mythological writing developed relatively late, conceivably under Greek influence, as a product of the symbiosis of the two cultures, and *comparanda* are lacking.

This composition has gained a fresh interest with the discovery of fragments of further copies of the Demotic original, mainly from Tebtunis, establishing its importance in the eyes of the priests who maintained the land's traditions in Roman Egypt. Two have been published, *P. Tebtunis Tait* 8 (now in Oxford)¹⁴ and *P. Lille Dem.* 31 (see Tait 1974; 1976; de Cenival 1985). All, like the Leiden papyrus, are probably to be dated to the second century CE.¹⁵ The Leiden papyrus itself records variants, implying several stages of copying and collation of several copies;¹⁶ evidence of some textual fluidity is no surprise. The Lille papyrus starts to offer an intelligible text at an earlier point in the narrative than the Leiden papyrus; the numbering of its columns shows that a substantial amount of text preceded. It is hardly surprising that much of what we have is puzzling. Of course, the publication of this welcome access of Demotic material is likely to

¹² Stephens and Winkler 1995: 14–15. Its re-admission to this category is however urged by López Martínez 2010: 101–6.

¹³ Manteuffel 1930.

¹⁴ I am not convinced that this fragment (on which see further below) is more than an excerpt; in discussion, Kim Ryholt reported a further fragment in the same hand from the fable of the mouse and the lion, but that passage too might well be selected by someone extracting attractive material which would make sense without the framing narrative. Papyrologists must normally work with the assumption that fragments of literary texts imply copies of whole books, but extracts would have been very useful for classroom purposes, in both Greek and Demotic.

¹⁵ As with the Greek translation, these dates are based on purely palaeographic criteria, and we need to allow some leeway; in every such case we might be dealing with the work of an elderly scribe who had not changed his style since he was instructed in his youth by an elderly scribe.

¹⁶ 'Colleagues in classical philology will be enthralled to hear that Egyptian priests copied the methods of the Alexandrian philologists in their editorial work' (Clarysse 2005: 187). It is perhaps questionable whether the Egyptian clerics themselves would have seen the matter thus; rather, the work of the Alexandrian scholars resulted in a general rise in standards of book production and increasing sensitivity to variations in wording, observable also in the transmission of the Hebrew Bible at this period.

lead to a much better understanding of the Greek version; but some years must elapse before it is fully available.¹⁷ For the moment, we can count it a significant advance that the translator's motivation has become clearer: a text of which so many copies have been found was clearly important, and it was thus highly desirable to make it accessible to people who could not read Demotic, a skill by this time restricted to the clergy, while the language itself, increasingly pervaded by Greek loan words, was rather remote from the common tongue.¹⁸ In such a case the translation of traditional literature served the preservation of cultural and religious values. Of course, translation into Greek also made the text accessible to an international readership, though whether this composition would have found a readership outside Egypt may seem unlikely.

In the Greek translation Thoth is Hermes, as we should expect; the conventional identification is particularly happy in view of Hermes' role as protector of travellers.¹⁹ For much of the narrative he assumes an animal form, for which the otherwise unattested (and puzzling) *λυκόλυγξ*, 'wolf-lynx', is used,²⁰ whereas in the Demotic he is a *kuf*,²¹ 'little dog-ape' (not Thoth's usual animal counterpart, the baboon); towards the end he changes into a lynx. *Interpretatio Graeca* did not extend to Tefnut, who has no such regular Greek counterpart. In the extant fragments the goddess is nowhere named; she is ἡ θεός, and when Hermes addresses her he calls her δέσποτι or θεά. The translator neutralises 'I know that the Cat is your name' with 'I know that your name is immortal' (ἐπίσταμαι ὅτι ἀθάνατον ὄνομά σου) (D II 16–17). When Hermes changes into a lynx, she changes into a gazelle (δορκάς); there is nothing against supposing that, as in the Demotic original, she is a cat most of the time, but changes herself into a lioness to terrify her companion. Re is generally equated with Zeus, but also appears once (D I 52) as ὁ ἥλιος. The only Egyptian name preserved is a title of Tefnut's brother Shu, Aresnoupheis 'the good comrade'. A reference to the act of masturbation by which Re generated the pair was judged too alien for Greek readers, and is veiled by the irreproachable phrase [ἐξ οἴκου]ομίᾱς θεοῦ (A I 69), 'by divine dispensation'. The divinity Apophis, the serpent-formed enemy of Re, symbolising the forces of chaos and evil, was simply

¹⁷ See further von Lieven 2005; Ryholt 2005b. ¹⁸ Frankfurter 1998: 249.

¹⁹ For an illuminating discussion of the relationship between Hermes and Thoth, see Fowden 1993: 22–31.

²⁰ This implies an animal unfamiliar to the Greeks outside Egypt, perhaps a serval (*felis serval*); see further de Cenival 1999. It should not be assumed that the translator was responsible for the coinage.

²¹ Already in Aristotle's time (*HA* 502a17) this Egyptian term had made its way into Greek as κῆβος/κῆπος, as Luigi Prada has pointed out to me.

unsuitable for re-interpretation: he disappears, leaving his supporters as an ‘ungodly crowd’ (ἀσεβῶν πλῆθος) (F II 63–4), an anonymous group of troublemakers who seem out of place in this timeless narrative of ancient gods. The Greek version is at times more concise than the original, though that might reflect the translator’s copy of the original rather than his own decision.²² The loss of beginning and end leaves it uncertain whether the translator identified himself, or explained the circumstances which led him to undertake the work. It would certainly have been convenient if a title had been preserved for either the Demotic original or the Greek version.

In the first fragment of the Greek text (A 1) Hermes has just related a fable familiar to us from Archilochus (F 174–81) and Aesop (1 Perry) in which a bird of prey and a beast which have made their homes, one at the top, the other at the bottom, of a tall tree, make an agreement that neither would take advantage of the other’s absence to harm her young; the bird’s violation of this pact is followed by disaster for the offender, illustrating the effectiveness of divine retribution when the victim is powerless and cannot look to any earthly protector. In Archilochus and Aesop the animals are an eagle and a vixen; in the Demotic text they are a vulture and a cat,²³ but we do not know whether the Greek translator followed his model on this point. Thoth, all too well aware that Tefnut is dangerous and unpredictable, develops his story at some length, to show the inevitability of retribution. His fables relate to their situation; they are not told simply to entertain the goddess. He persuades her to take an oath; the content is not clear, but we might expect him to seek an assurance that she will do him no harm.

We have many illustrated papyri and ostraka of New Kingdom date depicting animals acting in human situations. A famous New Kingdom *ostrakon* now in Berlin (inv. no. 21443) offers what looks very like an illustration of our text: it shows a monkey and a lioness in conversation, with a large bird (not, it must be admitted, particularly like a vulture) and her nest in the background.²⁴ Some have seen this sketch as an illustration of this scene (implying not just the currency of the fable in New Kingdom

²² The translation is very perceptively discussed by Betrò 1984; see also Tait 1994: 212–13. The tantalising information that Eudoxus of Cnidus composed, or translated from Egyptian, dialogues of dogs (D.L. 8.89) might indicate a precedent for the translation of this type of literature; the uncertainty as to whether Eudoxus’ work was an original composition would be perfectly natural if the text required a high proportion of paraphrase and explanation. For various theories about Eudoxus’ production, see Griffiths 1965.

²³ The Egyptian conception of the vulture was more sympathetic than ours; see further *Lex.Äg.* 2.513–15 s.v. *Geier*.

²⁴ See Brunner-Traut 1968: 34–9, Ab. 10; conveniently reproduced in Hoffmann and Quack 2007: 203; its association with the legend of the Solar Eye is viewed sceptically by von Lieven 2009.

Egypt, but its context in the legend of the Solar Eye). But no Egyptian fable texts have come down to us from before the Graeco-Roman period, and the earlier existence of Egyptian animal fables is controversial. Did this story come from a Greek source? We know that this grim tale of divine punishment for treachery and bad faith was ancient before Archilochus, who expressly states that it was not his own invention: αἴνός τις ἀνθρώπων ὅδε ('men tell the following tale').²⁵ Some centuries earlier the theme was absorbed into the Babylonian tale of Etana, king of Kish, where the earth-bound animal is not a fox, but a snake,²⁶ and there can be little doubt of its Mesopotamian origins. Ideally, we need to distinguish the skeleton of the story, as we find it in Aesop, and the elaborations of Archilochus and *Etana*. The minimal version could travel orally very easily, its circulation favoured by the well-attested use of such stories in elementary instruction in schools, in Mesopotamia as later in Graeco-Roman education.²⁷ Potential scribes (from whom would be drawn, in due course, the country's representatives on foreign missions) would have absorbed such tales at an impressionable age (as many of us still do). How this example came to the notice of Egyptian priests is not clear.²⁸ At all events, the usefulness of the animal fable in negotiating with the powerful and/or easily offended is memorably demonstrated in Thoth's dealings with Tefnut.

Having induced the goddess to swear as he wished, Hermes moves on to develop the theme 'There's no place like home' (A II), more briefly than in the Demotic original.²⁹ Then, after a gap of unknown length, he recalls another fable (B), about a hawk, a goose and a hoopoe, mysterious to us but relevant, in his view, to their own situation. But he has already related this tale, and the furious goddess transforms herself from a cat to an angry lioness (C).³⁰

Having with some difficulty pacified her, he offers an account of a conversation between Sight and Hearing ('Ὀραῖσις and Ἀκοή), represented as vultures in the Demotic text, on the inevitability of retribution for killing (D). For this dialogue we have another witness to the Demotic text besides the Leiden papyrus, *P. Tebtunis* Tait 8 (see Tait 1976, including a

²⁵ Aristophanes attributes it to Aesop (*Birds* 651–3). ²⁶ Dalley 2000: 189–202.

²⁷ On the use of fables at various stages, from basic literacy to rhetorical exercises see Criboire 2001: 202–3; Morgan 1998: index s.v. 'fables'.

²⁸ See further Williams 1956; Herrmann 2010.

²⁹ It is a commonplace that the Egyptians were intensely home-oriented; to die abroad was regarded with peculiar horror (exemplified by *The Story of Sinuhe* (Lichtheim 1973: 222–35)).

³⁰ A relief from the Roman chapel of the temple at Dakke looks like an illustration of this scene: a baboon, with his arms raised in prayer, confronts a huge lioness, above which flies a vulture; the two divinities are identified as Thoth and Tefnut by inscriptions; reproduced in Hoffmann and Quack 2007: 215; see further Roeder 1930: I.312; II Taf. 115.

translation), probably from the second half of the second century CE. Sight describes how each of a series of creatures, starting with a lizard which swallowed a fly, is devoured by a larger, finishing at the top of the food chain with a lion, which falls victim to a griffin, the agent of Re's/Zeus's justice.³¹ The idea that the highest god concerns himself with justice among animals is not a commonplace, though it is clear in Archilochus' version of the first of Hermes' fables. This tale is not a fable;³² the vultures are simply observers, with extraordinarily keen perception and insight.³³ But it is a most impressive passage in which Hermes reinforces the message of the first fable: the sun observes all alike, and rewards both good and evil; though he is small and the goddess is strong, she should not suppose that she can mistreat him with impunity. He develops at some length the theme that divine vengeance is inescapable.

The Tebtunis fragment has not only clarified some uncertainties in the Leiden papyrus but has also revealed some textual fluidity; discrepancies between the Greek version and the Demotic are thus not necessarily to be ascribed to the Greek translator.

The goddess offers further reassurance (D II 23–5): οὐ μ[ή] σε ἀποκτεν[ῶ οὐδὲ π]οιῆσαι ἄ[λ]λωι ἐπιτρέψω ('I will not kill you and I will not get another to do so'). The pair continue on their way. Hermes now tells a nice story about an inseparable pair of animals – jackals in the Demotic original – which, while resting one day, observe an enormous lion rushing towards them. The lion expresses surprise when they simply stay where they are, but they explain that they knew they would be caught if they fled, and they would make a better meal if they had not pointlessly exhausted themselves. Their ironic defiance appeals to the lion, who spares them. In folktale and fable jackals are often cast as quickwitted tricksters. Thoth observes that a great lord is compassionate and is not angered by truth.³⁴ The story is evidently meant to point a moral: Thoth remains wary.

³¹ On the griffin as Nemesis, representing Petbe, a god from the last phase of Egyptian culture, see Kákosy 1995: 2984–5. On pictorial evidence for the griffin as the avenger of last resort (*letztinstanzlicher Vergelter*), see Morenz 1997/8.

³² A very similar point is made in one of Aesop's fables with an unusually specific Egyptian setting (32 Perry). A murderer in flight from his victim's kinsmen comes to the Nile, where he climbs a tree to escape a wolf or lion; there he finds a snake, and so throws himself into the river, to be eaten by a crocodile (for Egyptians symbolising justice). Adapted for school use, with the slayer specifically guilty of parricide, this was extraordinarily popular as a dictation exercise: see further Harrauer and Sijpesteijn 1985: 108–23 (No. 117–32). Cf. Antiphanes *Anth.Pal.* II.348.

³³ We may be reminded of Odin's ravens, Hugin and Munin ('Thought' and 'Memory'), which every day fly over all the world and return at dinner time to report to their master; see further M. L. West 2007: 149. I do not suggest a connection.

³⁴ This story seems to me to have something in common with the famous episode of Intaphernes' wife's appeal to Darius (Hdt. 3.119); there Darius' sympathy is evidently aroused by the woman's

For a long stretch of the following narrative the Greek version is lost. In the Demotic, Thoth assures the goddess that he will stay with her, though she finds rather ridiculous his undertaking to rescue her from any danger. But he has more lion stories in his repertoire, and now relates the tale of ‘the Lion in search of Man’, which culminates in the famous fable of ‘the Mouse and the Lion’ (Aesop 150 Perry). For this section we have the advantage of an English translation by Miriam Lichtheim,³⁵ from which I quote: ‘There was [a lion on the] mountain who was mighty in strength and was good at hunting. [The small game of the] mountains knew fear of him and terror of him. One day it happened that he met a panther whose fur was stripped, whose skin was torn, who was half dead and half alive [because of his] wounds. The panther [said to him]: “It was man.” The lion said to him: “Man, what is that?” The panther said to him: “There is no one more cunning than man. May you not fall into the hand of man!” The lion became enraged against man. He ran away from the panther in order to search for [man].’ The lion then meets a horse and donkey, yoked together, an ox and a cow, with their horns clipped, their noses pierced, and their heads roped, a bear whose claws and teeth have been removed, and finally another lion, who has been tricked into letting himself be trapped. (At this point we have a short fragment of the Greek version, E II.³⁶) Everywhere he finds evidence of the power, cunning and wickedness of man. So he determines to inflict on man such pain as these beasts have suffered. In the course of his quest for man, a mouse strays into his path; he is on the point of crushing it, when the mouse dissuades him, arguing that he is too small to be worth the lion’s eating, and he will one day make it possible for the lion to escape from misfortune. The lion, more impressed by the first argument than the second, which he regards as a joke, lets the mouse go. Shortly afterwards he is caught by a huntsman, bound with leather straps, and placed in a net. That night the mouse appears and proves as good as his word, gnawing through the lion’s bonds.³⁷ Together they go off to the mountains.

This is a complex narrative. In the first part we see the lion as king of the beasts, who takes it upon himself to punish the wickedness of those who

unexpected answer to his offer to spare the life of one of her male kin – husband, son, or brother – when she chooses her brother.

³⁵ Lichtheim 1980: 156–9.

³⁶ At l. 67 ἀνθ]ρωπος (with rough breathing) would be better than ἀνθρ]ωπος of ed. pr., the article having collective force.

³⁷ Such service from a friendly mouse is an important motif in the *Pancatantra* book 2. According to Herodotus (2.141), at the time of Sennacherib’s invasion of Egypt mass sabotage of Assyrian weaponry by mice saved the country.

have harmed his subjects. 'Here the Egyptian stepped out of himself, looked at man, and found him evil' (Lichtheim).³⁸ The role of the bear, not native to Egypt (despite Hdt. 2.67),³⁹ might suggest this tale originated elsewhere. This black portrayal of the effect of human activity shows a concern for animal rights unusual in antiquity. But the familiar, positive story of the helpful mouse is given a further interest as we see that the small, apparently insignificant, animal does not fail in his undertaking to repay his benefactor, while the lion's determination to exact revenge for the cruel treatment of other animals is completely futile.⁴⁰ Hermes earlier acknowledged that to the goddess he might seem ἀσθενής τις . . . καὶ ὀγεννής (D 159) ('weak and lowly'), but she should not dismiss the possibility that he might do her service.

In the last episode preserved in the Greek version (F 11) the pair have almost reached Thebes, and Hermes, now in the shape of a lynx, is able to rescue the goddess, now changed into a gazelle, from the assault of an ungodly crowd; the fable of the mouse and the lion thus proves very neatly to fit their situation. The Demotic text brings them happily to Memphis, and a joyful reunion with Re; the ending is lost.

It is hard to assess style where so few complete sentences are preserved,⁴¹ but so far as we can fairly compare it with its original, the Greek translation appears competent – not a literary masterpiece, but a respectable piece of work, 'a brave attempt at a plain translation'.⁴² By this time hard experience must have brought some appreciation of the problems of literary translation, a rather different activity from the interpreter's training instituted already under Psammetichus (Hdt. 2.154.2). Our understanding of this text is greatly handicapped by the loss of its beginning. A Greek readership might be expected to need background information about the myth beyond whatever was conveyed in the Demotic text, and a translator's preface might have answered many of the questions which now perplex us.

The translator of the aretology of Imouthes/Asclepius (*P.Oxy.* 1381⁴³) gives some account of his principles:

καὶ γὰρ τὸν τῆς κοσμοποιίας πιθανολογηθέντα μῦθον ἐν ἑτέροι βίβλῳ φυσικῶι πρὸς ἀλήθειαν ἀνῆπλωσα λόγῳ. καὶ ἐν τῇ ὅλῃ γραφῇ τὸ μὲν ὕστερον προσεπλήρωσα, τὸ δὲ περισσεῦον ἀφεῖλον, διήγημα δὲ πού

³⁸ See also Adrados 1999: 712–13.

³⁹ The Syrian bear (*ursus syriacus*) was known: see *Lex. Ag.* i.599–601 s.v. *Bär*. The animal has evidently surrendered its freedom for regular meals: should we think of a dancing bear?

⁴⁰ Well discussed by Adrados 1999: 710–12.

⁴¹ Enough to suggest a tendency to asyndeton.

⁴² Tait 1994: 213. ⁴³ Manteuffel 1930: 21–3; 86–91.

μακρολογούμενον συντόμως ἐλάλησα καὶ ἀλλαττολογο[ύμεν]ον⁴⁴ ἅπαξ ἔφρασα.

In another work I unfolded accurately with a scientific discussion the myth of the creation of the universe in terms calculated to persuade. Throughout the composition I supplied the elliptical and cut out superfluity, and for a narrative expressed at length and with complicated variation I offered a concise and straightforward version.

He evidently felt that quite a substantial measure of intervention was needed in order to make his Egyptian text acceptable to Greek readers.⁴⁵ The result would have been a version rather than a translation: commendable if well done, but potentially misleading without a guide familiar with the tradition to which it belongs. Looking on the bright side, we may view with satisfaction the ‘lively continuation of an indigenised literary Hellenism’;⁴⁶ but what was distinctive about the native tradition was liable to be weakened in the attempt to express its essence in terms intelligible to Greek readers. The well-known diatribe against the translation of Egyptian works put in the mouth of Asclepius in the *Corpus Hermeticum* (16.1–2; cf. Iambl. *Myst.* 7.5) must be treated with caution, but we should not pretend there was no real problem.⁴⁷

In the ethnically mixed environment of the *chora* of Roman Egypt some curiosity about the native religious traditions would be natural. But the lack of systematisation in Egyptian belief systems must have made it immensely hard for Greeks to orientate themselves in the mythology. The production of a Greek version of an important text was a sensible and constructive response. Given the length of the Demotic text, as revealed by the recent discoveries of several further copies, the task would have been quite time-consuming. We may assume that the translator came from the priesthood; only among the clergy did the ability to read and write Demotic survive, and they had every reason to encourage a sympathetic curiosity about their traditions.⁴⁸ We might speculate that this was a task for someone

⁴⁴ K. F. W. Schmidt (*GGA* 1918: 121); ἀλλαττόλογο[ν μῦθ]ον ed. pr.

⁴⁵ The translator’s preface to Ecclesiasticus should be compared; his approach was more straightforward, and he does not make light of the problems caused by the lack of precise equivalents for some Hebrew expressions. See further Leipoldt 1950; Brock 1979; Fowden 1986: 37; Renger et al. 2009.

⁴⁶ Frankfurter 1998: 245.

⁴⁷ This is not the place to survey other Greek papyrus fragments claimed as translations or adaptations of Egyptian material; they are too heterogeneous to allow general conclusions.

⁴⁸ Cf. Frankfurter 1998: 9: ‘Egyptian priests took various routes to maintain their traditions, roles and social authority . . . Using Greek and Hellenistic literary conventions and the synthetic writing system Coptic, they reinterpreted ancient legends, spells, and other traditions of the “House of Life”, the temple scriptorium, for an outsider’s culture anxious to plumb its hitherto illegible secrets.’

already experienced in presenting Egypt's gods in a manner acceptable to neighbours whose cultural background was essentially Hellenic.

The Leiden papyrus bears indications that it was meant to be read aloud or performed in some way, no doubt within the framework of the temple's regular activity. The Greek translation is unlikely to have had any place in religious life, and is probably best regarded as superior *Unterhaltungsliteratur*, intended for reading aloud to an interested circle. The high proportion of conversation between two very different personalities encourages a lively rendering, while familiar fables, the embodiment of ancient popular wisdom, gain a new life and dignity from their context, and provide reassurance in this strange zoolatrous milieu. Admittedly, there is little evidence for this form of entertainment in antiquity but this deficiency results, I would argue, from the fact that those who enjoyed it found nothing noteworthy about it. Lucie Duff Gordon thought it worth mentioning to her mother, when she wrote from Luxor in April 1867, requesting 'a good edition of the "Arabian Nights" in Arabic... It is a favourite amusement to make one of the party read aloud; a stray copy of "Kamar ez-Zeman and Sitt Boodoora" went all round Luxor, and was much coveted for the village *soirées*. But its owner departed, and left us to mourn over the loss of his MSS.'⁴⁹ Increasing literacy is likely to stimulate a taste for prose narratives more ambitious than the oral art of the traditional storyteller, but solitary reading and private study are expensive pastimes where both books and lighting are costly. Sharing the contents of a book with a group by reading it aloud might be seen as simply good manners.⁵⁰ A skilful reader can lend appeal to literature far more demanding than many of his (or her) audience would think of tackling on their own.

The classical genres had largely defined themselves by the occasions of their performance or presentation. The lack of a Greek or Latin term corresponding to 'novel/romance' may reflect the rather modest status of the situations for which the early novels were intended – village (or suburban) *soirées*, to borrow Lucie Duff Gordon's term. Of course, there are other types of literature well suited to a workforce's relaxation or to enlivening the tedium of a monotonous task;⁵¹ but a narrative will hold the attention of many to whom other literary genres seem pointless.

⁴⁹ Duff Gordon 1902 (1983): 339.

⁵⁰ On this point, see Clanchy 1979: 198 (with reference to England c. 1300).

⁵¹ Thus Helen brings her spinning when she comes to join Menelaus and his guests after supper (*Od.* 4.121–35). See further S. West 2003a.

John Barns, in his stimulating paper on the place of Egypt in the development of the Greek novel,⁵² noted that Rattenbury's hesitation as to whether such a composition as this should be grouped with the romances 'raises a crucial question: what is a romance? I feel sure that the tendency has been for scholars to adopt a too rigid definition; especially when it leads them to deny the possibility of a connection between different types of Greek fiction; and that it would be better to reconsider our categories after an examination of the wide field of Egyptian fiction.' In the half century since he wrote, our conception of the Greek novel has been enormously extended, as has the range of Demotic literature;⁵³ as Ian Rutherford's paper shows, significant Egyptian influence on its development now looks a much more promising hypothesis than it did in the 1950s. That would not of course rule out consideration of other Near Eastern contributions to the evolution of a peculiarly protean genre.⁵⁴

⁵² Barns 1956.

⁵³ Hoffmann 2007: 279–80 emphasises the extraordinary growth and expansion of Demotic studies since the 1970s.

⁵⁴ I benefited greatly from the opportunity to discuss this text with participants at the workshop and subsequently profited from exchanging ideas with Luigi Prada; to all of them my warmest thanks are due.

*Fictions of cultural authority**Susan Stephens*

Greece's literary fascination with Egypt began well before novel writing commenced. As early as the fifth century BCE, Herodotus devoted the second book of his *Histories* to Egypt, and in his presentation of native priests as the repositories of otherwise inaccessible historical and sacred knowledge and by his inclusion of picaresque tales like those about the pharaoh Rhampsinitus,¹ he replicates salient features of Egyptian self-representation. The Setne Khaemwas tales will serve to illustrate this point.² Originally, Khaemwas was the High Priest of Ptah in Memphis, who devoted his time to preserving the even earlier Egyptian past and recorded his efforts in inscriptions on statues and monuments for posterity. In the Ptolemaic period, if not earlier, he came to be the main character in what appears to have been a cycle of tales of magic and adventure, two of which have survived in considerable part.³

The first opens with Khaemwas searching for the magic book of Thoth. Entering a tomb, he encountered the ghosts of the tomb's owner, Naneferkeptah, his wife and son, and learns their history: Naneferkeptah himself had earlier searched for the book and recovered it from the depths of the sea. It now resided in his tomb. But by his theft he incurred the wrath of Thoth, and lost his wife and son, whose bodies were never recovered. Khaemwas plays a board game for the book, but when he loses, he steals it. In revenge Naneferkeptah, who even in death had retained his magic powers, contrives a punishment: Khaemwas finds himself fatally attracted to a woman of unsurpassed beauty, Tabubu, whom he saw within the precincts of the temple of Ptah in Memphis. But at the climactic moment, she disappears into thin air. Whereupon Setne finds himself lying naked

¹ Both Rhampsinitus and the thief (2.121) and Rhampsinitus playing dice with Demeter (Isis) in the underworld (2.122) have clear Egyptian analogues (see Lloyd 1975–1988: 2.52–9).

² Khaemwas was the fourth son of Ramses II, the New Kingdom pharaoh who ruled from 1279–45 BCE. Sem, Setem, Setna and Setne are different vocalisations of the same priestly title.

³ Simpson 2003: 453–89 and Hoffmann and Quack 2007: 118–52.

on the ground in the temple precinct and at a time when the pharaoh is walking by.⁴ Much chastened, Khaemwas returns the magic book. The second tale features Khaemwas' son Si-Osire, who is in reality the son of the god Osiris, as the name (Si = son) makes clear. He has been made incarnate to defeat a Nubian sorcerer bent on destroying Egypt. The tale concludes with a duel between the two in which the more potent magic of Si-Osire defeats the Nubian.

These tales encapsulate a number of features of late Egyptian narrative that are deeply rooted in cultural circumstance. The characters tend to be high priests of the great shrines at Memphis or Heliopolis; they are skilled in magic that can be used for good or ill; ghosts and tombs and the recovery of the past may drive events. Characters are seekers after or possessors of knowledge that is usually secret or ancient or both. Egypt for millennia had been invested in tombs to preserve the body after death, but equally invested in discovering and preserving its own past. After the Persian and Greek conquests, when its long history as an independent country had come to an end, the priesthoods were left largely to their own devices under occupying governments; temples continued to be built, and scribal elites, particularly those attached to the Houses of Life, where sacred texts were stored, annotated and copied, increased their efforts to gather and preserve the writings of the past. This last practice influenced the ways in which theoretically non-fictional writings might present themselves. *P.Oxy.* 1381 is an example. The surviving text is an aretology of the god Imouthes-Asclepius. In the framing narrative, a priest of the god explains that he found the aretology in an old book that was originally composed in the time of the Fourth Dynasty pharaoh, Menkhaure. Subsequently the book was discovered and restored by Nectanebo (the figure who occurs also in the *Alexander Romance*), and now it resides in the care of the priests of the god. The author acts under a divine compulsion to make this translation – the god had come to him in a dream insisting that he complete the work (lines 107–40). Demotic papyri tell similar tales: the *Book of the Temple* is a manual of an ideal temple that begins with a frame in which Hardjedef, the son of another Fourth-Dynasty pharaoh, Cheops, is the author of a decree found in a ruined temple in Heliopolis.⁵ A more mundane version of Khaemwas' book of Thoth's wisdom was in wide circulation in the Ptolemaic and Roman periods.⁶ It purported to be an instruction from the god ('he who praises knowledge') to a mortal

⁴ Simpson 2003: 466.

⁵ Hoffman 2000: 125–7.

⁶ See Jasnow and Zauzich 2005.

(‘he who loves knowledge’) and to cover subjects like the scribal craft, sacred geography, the underworld, wisdom and prophecy.

Though filtered through a Greek cultural lens, this Egypt pervades the *Histories*. Herodotus relies on priests and temples as authoritative sources of information (e.g., 2.142–4)⁷ and because of its undeniable antiquity he even derived some Greek religious practices from Egyptian practice (e.g., 2.171). Magic and ghosts are in short supply, but tombs and trickery are not. A century later Plato presents a more sober Egypt in the interlocked frames of the *Timaeus* and now incomplete *Critias* as a prelude to the myth of Atlantis. In conversation with Socrates, Timaeus and Hermocrates, Critias relates a story told to him by his grandfather, who heard it from Solon (*Timaeus* 21a6–25d5). When Solon was visiting Egypt, a priest from the temple of Neith (Athena) in Sais informed him about the antiquity and inter-relatedness of Athens and Sais.⁸ According to the priest, Egypt had a record system that allowed it access to the past with authority, and it had a hereditary priesthood to serve as the guardian of knowledge. In the dialogue, the age of Egypt and its stability guaranteed the even older history of Athens, which Greeks themselves had long forgotten, and by extension the values of that older Greek place.

Similarly with the story of the invention of writing: Theuth/Thoth (*Phaedr.* 274c5–275b1) was the patron of scribes and, by virtue of his relationship with writing, the Egyptian divinity of knowledge, both open and secret. Plato at least pretends to be suspicious of writing, since writing encourages a false sense of what is real (accessible only by the act of recollection), and even places this doubt (which echoes Socrates) in the mouth of the Egyptian king Thamus,⁹ to whom Theuth brings his invention. Yet it is that very fact of writing (in the *Timaeus*) that permits the Egyptian priest to speak with authority, and it is the Egyptian ability (conveyed by writing) to stabilise artistic codes that are for the Athenian stranger an object of admiration in the *Laws* (656d1–7b10). In Plato’s fictions Egyptian priesthoods and writing systems, with their unique access to the past, serve as exempla for his own articulation of what constitutes well-regulated societies. Herodotus and Plato thus grant to Egyptian priests enunciative authority within their own texts, conceding to them – or at least employing them to give voice to – knowledge to which Greeks had no access.

⁷ See Moyer’s long chapter on this exchange (2011: 42–83).

⁸ The temple was well known in antiquity, and Neith was regularly identified with Athena (see Hdt. 2.170 and 175).

⁹ On the name, see Hoffmann and Quack 2007: 164 n. 282.

This reception of Egypt becomes more pronounced in later writers like Plutarch. His essay *On Isis and Osiris* sets out to translate what are perceived as significant (however foreign) religious myths and rituals not just into a Greek vernacular but into a Greek philosophical language. Plutarch may have been following Plato's lead in according a genuinely serious status to typical Egyptian behaviours, but in the process he demonstrates considerable familiarity with Egyptian narratives – particularly the New Kingdom story known as the *Contendings of Horus and Seth* and probably the *Lamentations for Osiris* and the *Tale of the Two Brothers*. Like Herodotus, he could have acquired this material from oral sources, since he supposedly travelled to Egypt, but he is just as likely to have acquired it through previous Greek writing on Egyptian subjects.¹⁰ Plutarch goes well beyond Plato: in addition to Solon, he claims that Thales, Eudoxus, Plato and Pythagoras had all gone to Egypt and learned wisdom from the priests.¹¹ If we correct for genre and narrative strategies, these three Greek writers are remarkably consistent in their representation of Egyptian priests and their knowledge, and there is a high degree of overlap with the ways such figures were actually represented in indigenous writing, although corpses, tombs and magic tend to be excluded.¹²

At once the most complete Greek fictional account we have of Egyptian priests and magic, and one that speaks with the greatest cultural authority, is Nectanebo as presented in the *Alexander Romance*. Its Egyptian origin is undeniable and Demotic versions of it and the *Dream of Nectanebo* continue to come to light.¹³ It would seem to have belonged initially to a set of fictions intended to prop up Egypt's image (for Egyptians) after the Persian conquest and the fall of the last independent pharaoh, but it was also an attempt to position Alexander as the legitimate heir to the pharaonic dynasties. Within the tale there is no conflict between Nectanebo II as pharaoh and Nectanebo as astrologer and magician. The one profession succeeds the other seamlessly. As pharaoh he employs magic to defeat his enemies by filling a bowl with water, fashioning enemy ships of wax and then destroying them.¹⁴ However, the gods finally desert Egypt, and he flees to Macedon disguised as a *προφήτης*, or priest – an obvious choice, because the pharaoh was *de facto* a high priest – and fathers Alexander. In Macedon Nectanebo persuades Philip that Olympias' pregnancy was

¹⁰ Gwyn-Griffiths 1970: 195–218.

¹¹ In *De Iside et Osiride* §10 the name of Solon's priestly informant is given as Sonkhis the Saite.

¹² Plutarch allegorises what he can and adds a disclaimer on the rest, see, e.g., §20.

¹³ See Hoffmann and Quack 2007: 162–7; Jasnow 1997; Ryholt 1998a; and Moyer 2011: 137–8.

¹⁴ The ritual fashioning and subsequent destruction of figures of an enemy was well attested, see Ritner 1993: 161–7.

divinely ordained by sending first a hawk to tell the absent Philip that Olympias is pregnant,¹⁵ and when Philip baulks, Nectanebo turns himself into a serpent that coils up at Olympias' feet.¹⁶ At this Philip acknowledges the divinity if not legitimacy of the heir's conception. This is rather tame by Egyptian narrative standards, and, in fact, Nectanebo fathers Alexander not by magic, but by deception. When Olympias consults Nectanebo about her childlessness, he persuades her that the god Amun desires her, induces a dream to that effect and, after she consents to experience the god's 'real' presence, Nectanebo himself, decked out in the theriomorphic mask of the ram-god, obliges her. The result is Alexander. As John Ray puts it:

This neatly combines the historical link between Alexander and the oracle of Ammon at Siwa with the myth of the divine birth of the Pharaoh . . . It had the advantage of turning Alexander into an Egyptian, with the right to rule the country in his turn . . . it was as if Egypt could only be conquered by one of her own sons.¹⁷

The Nectanebo episode of the *Alexander Romance*, then, not only presents an Egyptian version of Greek historical events, but assimilates Alexander into an Egyptian ideological landscape, where his outsider status is negated or erased by making him the ultimate insider. While Nectanebo may be less admirable than Plato's or Plutarch's Egyptians, his powers are not in doubt.

If we turn to the Greek and Roman fictional narratives that are roughly coincident in time with Plutarch, we find that the potency of Egyptian priests continues to manifest itself. In the final book of Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*, for example, the main character, Lucius, is liberated from his ass form after a vision of Isis, in gratitude for which he not only converts to her worship, but even becomes a priest of her cult in Rome.¹⁸ The very popularity and spread of the Isis cult guaranteed that many aspects of Apuleius' narrative would have been familiar to his audience and, in fact, his descriptions of priestly appearance and ascetic behaviours correspond to what is known about Egyptian temple life: incubation and prophetic dreams, the wearing of animal masks to simulate the presence of the Egyptian theriomorphic deities (particularly, Anubis and Hathor), ritual implements, sacred books written in hieroglyphics and magic spells.¹⁹ But the Isis book creates a sense of unease for modern critics – does Lucius undergo a true conversion, or is it part of an elaborate charade to tease the reader? Unease results not only from the incongruity of Lucius' previous

¹⁵ *AR* 1.8. Nectanebo was worshipped as the Horus falcon at Edfu; see Ray 2002: 121–2.

¹⁶ *AR* 1.10. ¹⁷ Ray 2002: 128. ¹⁸ On Apuleius, see further Harrison, this volume.

¹⁹ Gwyn Griffiths 1975: 217–18.

adventures as an ass juxtaposed with serious conversion, but because the cult asks the Greek reader to enter into an alien and unfamiliar world – an Egyptian world – where people look, behave and talk differently.²⁰ However, Apuleius may have entered that world naturally. He was a resident of North Africa, accused of and tried for dabbling in magic, with sufficient interest in and/or affiliation with the Hermes (Asclepius) cult that subsequent Greek and Christian sources could attribute to him the authorship of the Hermetic tract known as *Asclepius*.²¹ Apuleius is a figure, who, like his protagonist, had considerable curiosity about a wide variety of phenomena along a continuum bounded by philosophy at one end and the occult at the other, and was – depending on your point of view – either pluralistic or indiscriminating in his tastes; but the tastes he reflects and his narrative incorporation of both serious philosophy and magic (not to mention salacious humour) find a ready parallel in fictions like that of Setne Khaemwas.

In the Greco-Roman world the pervasiveness of the Isis cult and its alien rituals led to misunderstandings and frequent allegations of chicanery. For example, in his *Jewish Antiquities* (18.63–8) Josephus relates an incident that led to the closing of the Isis temple in Rome. Paulina was a virtuous Roman matron devoted to Isis. Decius Mundus coveted her, but his approaches were repulsed. He then instructed his freedwoman to bribe the priests of Isis to inform Paulina that Isis' divine companion, the god Anubis, wished to sleep with her. After consulting her husband, she acquiesced, and Mundus, now tricked out in the traditional theriomorphic mask of Anubis, spent the night with her in the temple, and so consummated his passion. When the treachery was revealed, Paulina's husband appealed to the emperor Tiberius, who had the priests crucified and the cult expelled. In fact, Tacitus records in the *Annals* 2.85 that the cult was indeed expelled, though Josephus' colourful anecdote is omitted.

Josephus' Isiac priests, like Nectanebo, are engaging in genuine Egyptian religious practices though they have exchanged piety for deceit. This type appears also in Antonius Diogenes' the *Unbelievable Things Beyond Thule*. Now surviving only in an epitome, testimonia and at least four papyrus fragments,²² it is assignable to the middle of the second century CE.²³ According to the epitome, it falls into two discrete parts: the

²⁰ Hence Winkler's interest in the semiotics of baldness (1985: 224–7); in contrast, see Plutarch's explanation of priestly purity, *De Iside et Osiride* §4.

²¹ Fowden 1993: 10.

²² See Stephens and Winkler 1995: 101–57 and *P. Oxy.* 70.4760 and 4761 for more recent fragments.

²³ Bowie 2002: 58–60.

adventures of Deinias on the one hand and a sister-brother pair, Derkyllis and Mant(in)ias, on the other.²⁴ Deinias and Derkyllis become lovers after they meet on Thule, where she recounts her adventures to him. Deinias then continues his adventures beyond Thule, while she and her brother return to their home, Tyre, where Deinias later joins them. A central character in the story is an Egyptian priest, Paapis.²⁵ It is difficult to estimate his role in the novel, though within the brother-sister tale it must have been extensive. Like Nectanebo, he left Egypt when the country was in turmoil, and perhaps at the time when independent rule had come to an end, though Photius does not make this explicit. Paapis fled to Tyre, where Derkyllis' family befriended him. He apparently rewards their *philoxenia* by persuading Derkyllis and Mant(in)ias to increase their parents' longevity with a spell of his providing, but in the event it serves only to cast them into a deathlike sleep. Derkyllis and her brother are then forced to flee Tyre. In the course of a series of increasingly improbable adventures, they again encounter Paapis, and this time they escape with his satchel of herbs and spells.²⁶ Paapis catches up with them on Thule, and turns them into zombies – they die each day and live by night – by spitting into their faces. Throuskanos, who is in love with Derkyllis, in his outrage at this act, kills Paapis, and in his grief at Derkyllis' seeming death, kills himself as well. Yet another character retrieves the satchel and discovers how to reverse the spell on Derkyllis and Mantinias, and later their parents. Paapis does not fare any worse in Greek fictions than such a character would have in Egyptian ones, but he is completely separated from his own cultural milieu, where there would doubtless have been a good Egyptian priest-magician to counteract his spells. Instead he encounters a sword-wielding Greek.

Whether we choose to admire their learning or greet them with scepticism and incredulity, all of these characters are represented as possessing powers and knowledge that Greeks do not. It would be a mistake to assume that they are merely projections of Greek chauvinism, because so much of what may seem negative by a Greek standard is culturally acceptable if not admired by an Egyptian. Paapis' behaviour as priest and magician, for example, conforms to Egyptian ritual logic: spitting was a well-documented ritual practice to inflict harm, while books of spells were studied and copied

²⁴ In Photius, the name is Mantinias, in *P.Oxy.* 70.4760 Mantias (see discussion in introduction to the papyrus edition).

²⁵ The name, Paapis, occurs in Manetho and Josephus, as that of the father of a famous sage, Amenophis, who was involved in the cleansing of the lepers from Egypt (fr. 54 Waddell). This Paapis cannot be the same man, but the choice of a name with historical associations may have lent a semblance of plausibility to the fiction.

²⁶ *P.Oxy.* 70.4760, fr. 2.4–9 mentions Paapis and his satchel of books.

in temple libraries.²⁷ But the relative cultural authority that these types of Egyptian characters have been granted in Greek writing – whether for good or ill – disappears when we turn to the five Greek novels that survive intact. In the novels of Chariton, Xenophon of Ephesus and Achilles Tatius the protagonists may experience hair-raising adventures in Egypt – travelling from Tyre to Alexandria, the Delta and penetrating as far south as Memphis and Coptos, but there is little of the Egypt of arcane knowledge, temples, or magic. Instead there are Delta-dwelling robber bands known as *boukoloï*, who must have belonged to the Greeks' recent historical experience of Egypt.²⁸ In comparison to Herodotus, who details temples and temple worship, divinities, monuments and unique religious behaviours, these idealising novels erase Egypt's particularity. For three of them this shift in how to represent an 'authentic' Egypt makes sense. The presence of native priests and magic, to judge from Antonius Diogenes or Apuleius, would surely have altered the nature of the fictions.

However, this shift does pose questions for Heliodorus' *Ethiopica*. The bulk of his novel is not only set in Egypt, but one of its three main characters, Calasiris,²⁹ is supposed to have been an Egyptian high priest of Isis – although he is neither bald nor beardless. He claims that he left Egypt because of carnal temptations, and in his place one of his two sons held his office, while his other son became the leader of a band of *boukoloï*. Calasiris, like Nectanebo and Paapis, is a priest in exile, but nothing about his or his sons' behaviour resembles his fictional counterparts. However convoluted or even deceitful his narrative may be, his behaviour is often the inverse of other fictional Egyptians. For example, his excuse for his exile – fleeing the seductive lures of the beautiful Rhodopis in the temple of Isis (2.25) – is clearly reminiscent of the seduction of Setne Khaemwas by Tabubu in the temple of Ptah.³⁰ But unlike Khaemwas, who succumbs with enthusiasm before he repents, Calasiris sins only in thought, choosing a life of wandering, during which he reaches another temple community, Delphi. There he expounds Egyptian lore about the stars and the Nile to those in residence. But as Richard Hunter remarks:

Though [Calasiris] prefaces his account of the Nile as 'everything I knew, all that is recorded . . . in sacred texts, things of which none but members of the priestly caste may read and learn' (2.28.2), he proceeds to give an account which would surprise no Greek interested in the subject.³¹

²⁷ Ritner 1993: 82–7. ²⁸ Winkler 1980: 175–81, Rutherford 1997: 206–8.

²⁹ *Kalasiries*, according to Hdt. 2.164, were one of the two classes of Egyptian military. See Rutherford 1997: 208 on Egyptian priests as warriors.

³⁰ See Rutherford 1997: 205 and n. 8. ³¹ Hunter 1998: 52.

To the extent that it involves legitimate priestly knowledge, it expresses a superficial assimilation of Egyptian ideas to Greek modes of thought, thus removing from Calasiris any bid for cultural authority at the same time that he asserts it. Other elements of supposedly real Egyptian practice are dismissed as evil and unworthy of true priestly behaviour (3.16).

On one level this may result from a straightforward need to recuperate suspect Egyptian behaviours for a Greek audience. Yet an incident at the end of book 6, where an old woman practises necromancy to learn from her dead son the fate of another son, raises more questions than it answers:

Supposing herself now secure against any intrusion or observation, the old woman began by digging a pit, to one side of which she lit a fire. After positioning her son's body between the two, she took an earthenware bowl from the tripod that stood beside her and poured a libation of honey into the pit, likewise of milk from the second bowl, and lastly of wine from the third. Then she took a cake made out of fine wheat flour and shaped it into an effigy of a man, crowned it with bay and fennel, and flung it into the pit.³²

Chariclea, who has been travelling with Calasiris, is intrigued and wants to ask the old woman about the fate of her lover, Theagenes, but Calasiris excoriates the old woman's behaviour in language that he had used earlier in book 3.16:

... saying that the mere sight of such things was unclean and that he could only tolerate it because he had no alternative; it was not proper for a priest to take part in or to be present at such rites; the prophetic powers of priests proceeded from legitimate sacrifices and pure prayer, whereas those of the profane were obtained literally by crawling upon the ground and skulking among the corpses, as the accidents of circumstances had permitted them to see this Egyptian woman doing.³³

Unfortunately, the distinction Calasiris makes did not exist within Egyptian thought. What is generally translated as magic – *heka* – was, according to Robert Ritner, a broader and less divisible concept:

Amoral and quintessentially effective... a power to which gods, men, and all of nature were subject, it was still the same force whether used by god, king, priest, private individual, rebel, or foreign enemy, whether hostile or beneficent, sanctioned or suppressed.³⁴

³² 6.14.3, tr. J. Morgan.

³³ 6.14.7, tr. J. Morgan.

³⁴ Ritner 1993: 247.

The manipulation of this 'energy' constituted a sophisticated system of practical theology, a theurgy in which the priest performed the 'power of the gods'. If Zeus had *kratos* and *bie* sitting by his throne, the pharaoh had *heka* and *sia* – magic power and knowledge – at his side. Priests, particularly the scribes of the House of Life, were trained in ritual magic and preserved the texts that contained their spells. To the extent that the old Egyptian woman was successful, she was no different from the priests, and her knowledge and theirs would, in principle, have been the same and, despite Calasiris' abhorrence of the practice, the rite is efficacious – it is from this source that he learns of the fate of his own sons.

Egyptian magic is a technology with an inherent logic that made it effective; but the rituals Heliodorus describes are over-determined if not nonsensical, and as a priest he should have understood the technology as well as, or better than, the old woman. Her rites begin by imitating the opening of *Odyssey* 11: Odysseus digs a trench, filling it with milk, honey, wine and barley in order to summon the ghosts of the dead. Within its Homeric milieu, Odysseus' actions were potent and brought him the desired information. So *prima facie* this rite alone would have been enough. Next the old woman makes an effigy – probably meant to serve as the repository for the ghost of the dead man – that she throws into the pit.³⁵ Finally she reanimates her son's body. This act had already made its way into Roman fiction at least a century earlier. Apuleius, in his *Metamorphoses*, relates an incident in which an Egyptian priest of Isis, Zatchlas, reanimates a corpse so that the dead man could point to his murderer (2.28–30), and at least in Apuleius it is packaged as an act performed in the service of justice. Probably a genuine Egyptian ritual underpins these examples: the Opening of the Mouth ceremony that was performed on the mummified dead, even though that ceremony was not intended to reanimate the corpse, but to awaken the dead person's *ka* (or soul) in the afterlife.³⁶ Heliodorus' old woman thus employs three types of necromancy – the first to recall ghosts, the second to provide a body for a specific ghost and the last to reanimate a specific body. Only the last seems to achieve its goal, so why include the first two, which are in any case unnecessary?

This ritual profusion could result from the author's lack of knowledge about true Egyptian magic practices, or alternatively, since what is related is

³⁵ Egyptians might petition the dead, or use various parts of a corpse in certain spells (see Ritner 1993: 178–9). Also, tiny replicas of humans (*ushabti*s) were buried with the well-to-do to serve them in the afterlife, but they were not employed in necromancy. In fact, this passage provides a unique 'Egyptian' example of the use of a doll to represent the ghost of the dead; it was more commonly attested in Greco-Roman practice (see Ogden 2004: 187 and 202–8).

³⁶ Pinch 1994: 152. The ceremony came to be performed for all Egyptian dead.

not particularly arcane or secret, it could have been devised to blur cultural distinctions by deploring as Egyptian what was patently Greek. It is also possible that Calasiris was engaging in deliberate obfuscation. In the third century CE, the Roman authorities made increasingly serious efforts to ban the practice of magic – a famous edict from Egypt in 199 CE makes it a capital crime.³⁷ Thus the fact that priestly learning would automatically have included the study and practice of magic probably encouraged strategies of deniability. What better way to deflect attention from Egyptian magic practices than (1) to distance them from true priestly behaviours and (2) to rewrite them as Homeric or as part of a generalised hocus pocus that was already familiar from Greek fictions? Yet in deploring magic practices, Heliodorus deprives Egyptian priests of a culturally distinctive source of power and that, coupled with his already diluted priestly wisdom, leaves them as nothing more than impotent relics of a once powerful culture.³⁸

What unites the novels of Chariton, Xenophon, Longus and Achilles Tatius is the fiction of Hellenocentrism: Greek breeding lines allow the more or less anonymous teen lovers in these novels to enter a non-Greek environment and emerge intact, and in this respect their idealised love serves as a metonym for an ethnically intact Greekness in an ethnically fragmented world. The *Ethiopica* seems to question this idealising model at the same time that it also seems to reinforce it. If the narrative itself moves from mainland Greece to Ethiopia, the new king and queen of that land will be a well-born ethnic Greek (Theagenes) and a white-skinned, Greek-speaking girl, who cannot speak her native language and does not even have an Ethiopian name. They do not return, but then they may not need to. They bring their Hellenic identities with them. Does Heliodorus' seemingly radical inclusion of one of the most alien and distinctive figures of Greek writing – an Egyptian priest – within his own novel do no more than reinforce this model of Hellenism? Calasiris, after all, chose to put off his Egyptian priestly appearance and distinctive beliefs, unlike Chariclea who was born white and raised in Greece from infancy. Or does Heliodorus create an Egyptian character whose embrace of Greek rationalism and rejection of Egyptian superstitions is cunningly constructed to remind us of the extent to which both categories are fictions?

³⁷ *P. Yale inv.* 299, see Rea 1977, though necromancy is not one of the practices listed. See also, *P. Oxy.* 70.4760 n. 4–8.

³⁸ For a more typical (and probably contemporary) Greco-Roman treatment of priests and magic, see Moyer 2011: 264–73 on Thessalus.

PART II

Mesopotamians and Iranians

CHAPTER 7

Berosus

Johannes Haubold

Introduction

Berosus is not the first name that springs to mind when thinking about Greek prose fiction. He rejects what he calls ‘the falsehoods’ of earlier Greek authors and is generally thought to recount the history of Mesopotamia in an accurate, if rather unexciting, manner. Assyriologists praise his adherence to Mesopotamian chronicle sources and regret the fact that he was never widely read. It may perhaps be possible to argue that Berosus influenced some of the later novelists. He did of course write the original *Babyloniaca*, long before Iamblichus, and he was the first Greek author to establish a Babylonian authorial persona. Iamblichus seems to have presented himself as a Syrian with a Babylonian education, and, like Berosus, he shows off his knowledge of Babylonian language and customs.¹ Most strikingly, perhaps, Iamblichus asserts that he predicted the Parthian campaign of Verus.² Perhaps he was modelling himself on Berosus, who was famous in antiquity for his powers of prophecy.³ So, there are some affinities between Berosus and later novels, but in tone and conception Berosus is so different that any parallels in detail do not amount to a sustained history of influence. At this fairly basic level Berosus is probably not a missing link in the development of Greek prose fiction from the Hellenistic age to late antiquity.

A different approach seems more promising. Rather than treating Berosus as an answer to the old question of where Greek prose fiction originates, we might regard him as a rare example of a non-Greek responding to such fiction. That is what I propose to do in this contribution. Berosus, I argue, was familiar with Semiramis, Sardanapallus and other

¹ See *FGrH* 696 F27b and c, with discussion in Stephens and Winkler 1995: 181–2 and Millar 1993: 489–92.

² *FGrH* 696 F27b 2, 21–2. ³ Berosus T 6 *BNJ*.

flamboyant characters like them. In some cases he rejected stories about them outright, but in others he retained and creatively reworked what he knew of the Greek tradition. I shall ask why he did so, and to what effect. I do not of course claim that Berossus is in any way representative of Babylonian responses to Greek prose. He was in fact quite exceptional in terms of education and social standing, and I am conscious here of going against one of the ideas behind this collection, which is to look beyond the elite bias of our sources. My excuse is that Berossus happens to be the only Babylonian reader of Greek fiction whose work survives; and he also happens to be an interesting one, as I hope to show.

Berossus' main work, the *Babyloniaca*, is dedicated to the Seleucid king Antiochus I and describes the history of the world from a broadly Babylonian vantage point. However, it is written in Greek and is clearly meant for the benefit of Greek readers.⁴ The *Babyloniaca* is not well preserved, but enough of it survives to give us a fairly good sense of what it must have been like. After an opening section about Babylonian geography and customs, book 1 describes the creation of the world. Book 2 covers the period from the first king Aloros down to Nabonassaros (Nabû-našir) in the eighth century BCE. Book 3 treats the more recent history of Babylon. The narrative texture of the *Babyloniaca* ranges from ethnographic passages to cosmogonic myth, king lists and royal biographies. Berossus himself claims to have based his entire account on the ancient archives of Babylon,⁵ and this seems largely true: much of the *Babyloniaca* can indeed be traced back to extant cuneiform sources. For books 1 and 2, the main sources are the classics of Mesopotamian literature, especially the epic of creation (*Enûma eliš*) and the myth of the Great Flood. For book 3, Berossus draws extensively on Babylonian chronicles and royal inscriptions, as Bert van der Spek emphasises in a recent article.⁶

Berossus, then, is beguilingly true to his promise that he will write the history of Babylon according to ancient cuneiform archives – but those archives are not his only intertexts. In this chapter, I argue that Berossus also knew, and reworked, Greek orientalising fiction about Mesopotamia; and that he strategically employed romance-like registers to engage his Greek readers.

⁴ For the dedication to Antiochus, see T2 *BNJ*. For Berossus' intended audience and literary aims, see variously Schnabel 1923, Komoroczy 1973, Drews 1975, Burstein 1978, Kuhrt 1987, de Breucker 2003, Beaulieu 2006, Bichler 2007a, Dillery 2007, and van der Spek 2008.

⁵ Berossus fr. 1 *BNJ*. ⁶ Van der Spek 2008.

Semiramis: falsehoods

My starting point is Semiramis, the glamorous Assyrian queen of the Greek imagination, who was supposedly born of the Syrian goddess Derketo, married the Assyrian king Ninus, built Babylon and, after conquering much of the known world, turned into a dove. The story can be found in Ctesias, though at least part of it was older.⁷ Ctesias' account in his *Persica* is almost certainly what Berossus had in mind when he took issue with 'the Greek historians' in *Babyloniaca* 3:

Berossus gives this account about the above-mentioned king [...] in the third book of the *Chaldaika*, in which he censures the Greek historians for wrongly thinking that Babylon was founded by Semiramis of Assyria and for falsely writing that the marvellous constructions within it were built by her.⁸

Taken at face value, this might seem like a straightforward example of Berossus checking the claims of Greek orientalising fiction against his superior Mesopotamian sources, and finding them wanting. A case, then, of one literary culture clashing with another? Greek fiction vs. Babylonian chronicles? Perhaps not. Criticising one's predecessors was a familiar trope in Greek historiography, and Herodotus in particular used the figure of the non-Greek informant (often a priest, like Berossus himself) to debunk Greek mainstream opinion.⁹ So, what is at issue when Berossus accuses 'the Greek historians' of writing falsehoods about Semiramis is not simply a Babylonian's view of the historical truth but a complex piece of authorial role-play, which seems itself shaped by Greek traditions of writing.¹⁰

There is another reason for thinking that Berossus does more in *Babyloniaca* 3 than merely set the historical record straight or advocate a superior kind of history. According to Josephus, his complaints do not focus on Semiramis' alleged descent from a goddess, or her metamorphosis into a dove – Berossus seems particularly concerned with a less obviously extravagant aspect of Ctesias' narrative: the description of Semiramis' building work in Babylon. Josephus may or may not be providing an accurate paraphrase of the *Babyloniaca* at this point (though we do know that he is

⁷ *FGrH* 688 Frb–m; for discussion of Semiramis and Sammu-rāmat, see Pettinato 1988, Weinfeld 1991, Comploi 2000 and Dalley 2005.

⁸ Berossus fr. 8a *BNJ*.

⁹ *Hdt.* 2.113–20 is a prime example. For a more sustained attack on the historical ignorance of the Greeks, see *Pl. Tim.* 22b–23b.

¹⁰ Kuhrt 1987: 47, who quotes Murray 1972.

remarkably accurate elsewhere), yet he certainly identifies a central aspect of Berossus' work when he points to his commitment to Babylon.

Amélie Kuhrt has argued that Berossus contributed to a wider effort, on the part of the Seleucids, to revive Babylonian imperial traditions.¹¹ Seleucus and Antiochus were looking for positive models of kingship, and part of Berossus' task was to provide them. As an Assyrian and a woman, Semiramis was doubly unsuitable for a major role in his history of Babylon. According to Berossus, it was the much more suitable Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar who built up Babylon and made it the centre of a world empire. The Seleucid kings were invited to emulate him, and emulate him they certainly did: Antiochus I restored the main temple of Nabû, Nebuchadnezzar's patron god, at Borsippa; and Antiochus III on one occasion was presented with the ancient cloak of Nebuchadnezzar while celebrating a major Babylonian festival.¹²

Sardanapallus: fiction

Berossus was not concerned merely to broadcast historical truth as he understood it. In confronting the 'false reports of the Greeks' with his own superior knowledge, he advertised himself as a barbarian master of history (a decidedly Greek authorial role) while at the same time promoting the political and cultural agenda of his Seleucid patrons. The Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar was of crucial importance here, and I shall return to him in a moment. First, however, I need to discuss another character from Berossus' *Babyloniaca* who was rather more familiar to Greek audiences, the notorious Assyrian king Sardanapallus.

I should explain that as part of his attempt to reach out to Greek audiences, Berossus used Greek names wherever possible: for example he wrote Greek Semiramis, not Akkadian *Sammu-rāmat*; Greek Sardanapallus, not Akkadian *Aššur-bāni-apli*.¹³ With the Greek names came Greek stories, as Berossus knew full well. He realised, for example, that a full-blown Greek Sardanapallus romance had developed some time before he was

¹¹ Kuhrt 1987: 55–6, also Kuhrt and Sherwin-White 1991. For the Seleucids' apparent lack of enthusiasm for Achaemenid traditions of empire, see Del Monte 2001: 154, Austin 2003: 128.

¹² For Antiochus I and the temple of Nabû at Borsippa, see Kuhrt and Sherwin-White 1991; for Nebuchadnezzar as *narām Nabû* ('beloved of Nabû'), see Berger 1973: 75; for Antiochus III and the cloak of Nebuchadnezzar, see Del Monte 1997: 66–8. Del Monte 2001 discusses the Seleucids' predilection for Nebuchadnezzar.

¹³ Aramaic forms of the names helped to establish the identity of these figures; for Akkadian 'Aššur-bāni-apli' = Aramaic 'Sarbanabal' = Greek 'Sardanapallos', see de Breucker's commentary on Abydenos fr. 5 *BNJ*, ad 'Sardanapallos'.

writing. As with Semiramis, he probably encountered some of this material in Ctesias, where Sardanapallus appeared as the debauched last king of Assyria who lived only for pleasure and burnt himself and his belongings on an enormous pyre just before the fall of Nineveh.¹⁴ No such account can be found in Berossus' cuneiform sources. Nevertheless, and somewhat surprisingly, Berossus did not dismiss the Sardanapallus traditions out of hand, but rather set about putting them to his own use.

Berossus appears to have appreciated two popular motifs in particular: Sardanapallus on the pyre, and Sardanapallus at Tarsus. Ctesias tells us, in characteristically sensationalist tones, how the king burnt himself together with his belongings just before Nineveh fell to the Medes.¹⁵ Berossus knew from his cuneiform sources that this could not possibly have happened: Sardanapallus/Assurbanipal was not the last king of Assyria, so at the very least the story had to be brought forward by a generation. And that is precisely what Berossus did when he reported that Sarakos (the Assyrian king Sîn-šarra-iškun), and not Sardanapallus, burnt himself in his palace.¹⁶ What seems remarkable here is not that Berossus corrected Ctesias, but that he told the story at all. Babylonian chronicles tend to be matter-of-fact about major historical events. The chronicle fragment known as *Nabopolassar and the Fall of the Assyrian Empire* reports that in conquering Nineveh the Babylonians and Medes 'inflicted a crushing defeat on a [gr]eat [people]'.¹⁷ There is pathos in this formulation, but it would hardly have impressed Greek readers brought up on Ctesias. What we might call their storytelling approach to history was of course not exclusively Greek: Berossus himself is likely to have encountered it in the Aramaic milieu of his home city.¹⁸ However, dramatic stories are not a feature of the Babylonian chronicles on which Berossus claims to have based his account. All they told him was that Sarakos, and not Sardanapallus, was the last ruler of Nineveh, and that he died during the sack of that city.¹⁹ There remained a

¹⁴ Ctesias fr. 1b 23–27, with fr. 1p–q (Lenfant). For other sources and discussion of the Sardanapallus romance, see Drews 1970, Schneider 2000, Lenfant 2001.

¹⁵ Ctesias fr. 1q (Lenfant).

¹⁶ Abydenus fr. 5 *BNJ*. Clitarchus may have paved the way by denying that Sardanapallus committed suicide during the sack of Nineveh; cf. *FGrH* 137 F2. Berossus probably knew Clitarchus' work; see below p. 113.

¹⁷ Chronicle No. 22, line 43 (Glassner).

¹⁸ Note, for example, the story of the two brothers told in *P.Amherst* 63; cf. Steiner and Nims 1985, Steiner 1997. The Assyrian royal inscriptions were closer to this way of recording history than the Babylonian chronicles and royal inscriptions which Berossus used. For example, Assurbanipal claims that his rebellious brother Šamaš-šuma-ukīn was killed in the flames of his palace in Babylon; see MacGinnis 1988.

¹⁹ See Chronicle No. 22, line 44 (Glassner).

gap between Berossus' cuneiform sources and Greek expectations of how imperial history might meaningfully unfold. Berossus, it seems, understood the problem and for the benefit of his Greek readers adapted the story of the last king of Assyria who burnt himself in his palace.²⁰

Berossus did not simply present himself as a Herodotean native who always knows better. Historical truth, for him, was evidently layered, or rather textured: Berossus employed narrative strategies from culturally diverse sources. Just how creative he was in adapting Greek orientalising fiction to the needs of his narrative becomes clearer once we turn to the story of Sardanapallus in Tarsus.

The Alexander historian Aristobulus reports that Sardanapallus built the cities of Tarsus and Angchiale in Cilicia in one day, adducing as evidence a statue of the king with an inscription on it.²¹ The inscription was supposed to say: 'The son of Anakyndaraxos (i.e. Sardanapallus) built Angchiale and Tarsus in one day: eat, drink, play; for the rest is worth nothing at all'.²² Eating, drinking and enjoying oneself is not too far removed from Ctesias' own priorities in offering his sensationalist account of Sardanapallus. But building cities in a single day was clearly not a matter of taking things easy and enjoying oneself. Athenaeus remarks in this connection that Sardanapallus was not after all an idler (ἄπρακτος), and already Hellanicus had suggested that there were in fact two Sardanapalli, one energetic and virtuous (δραστήριος καὶ γενναῖος), the other lazy and effeminate (μαλακός).²³ Berossus takes up this idea and pushes it further: he leaves us with no fewer than three Sardanapallus figures: the king of that name; his successor Sarakos who burnt himself in his palace; and yet another Assyrian king who defeated the Greeks in Cilicia, set up his statue there and built Tarsus. Berossus calls him *Senekheribos*.²⁴ Babylonians would have known him as *Sîn-abhê-erîba*, the Sennacherib of modern Assyriology.

Assyrian kings built and rebuilt numerous cities, and perhaps there existed a Mesopotamian tradition linking Sennacherib in particular to

²⁰ Given his focus on Babylonian history, it seems unlikely that Berossus mentioned Aššur-uballiṣ II, the very last king of Assyria who ruled from Harran.

²¹ *FGrH* 139 F9; related sources and discussion in Jacoby's commentary *ad loc.* and Lenfant 2001: 49–50.

²² Σαρδανάπαλλος Ἀνακυνδαράξου παῖς Ἀγγιάλην καὶ Ταρσὸν ἔδειμεν ἡμέρῃ μιῇ. ἔσθιε, πίνε, παῖζε· ὥς τᾶλλα τούτου οὐκ ἄξια. The ancient sources take the concluding words as a reference to the image of the king which supposedly showed him snapping his fingers.

²³ Athenaeus XII 529 d; *FGrH* 4 F63 (Hellanicus). Berossus may have encountered the idea of two Sardanapalli in the Alexander historian Callisthenes; cf. *FGrH* 124 F34, with Jacoby's commentary *ad loc.* For further discussion, see Schneider 2000: 123–7.

²⁴ For the likely form of the name in Berossus, see de Breucker's commentary on Berossus fr. 7c *BNJ*, *ad* 'Sinek'erib'.

Tarsus. Stephanie Dalley has shown that that is at least possible.²⁵ But why should Berossus mention Tarsus at all? The answer, it seems, lies once again in his engagement with Greek readers and their expectations: Berossus takes his cue from them, though not without some telling adjustments.²⁶ His starting point are Greek stories about Sardanapallus and his building activities in Cilicia. Berossus confirms that an Assyrian king did indeed build Tarsus, but insists that he was called *Senekheribos*, not Sardanapallus. He also connects the building of Tarsus to that king's conquest of Babylon and his subsequent campaign against an invading Greek army; and he describes the new city as being modelled on Babylon.

It is perhaps best to take each of Berossus' claims separately. First of all, the historical king Sennacherib did indeed sack Babylon and deport its king in 689 BCE. The event was among the most traumatic in Babylonian history: almost 150 years later, under Nabonidus, Babylonians still remembered Sennacherib as a national hate figure.²⁷ Berossus places himself in this tradition when he reports Sennacherib's conquest of Babylon.²⁸ But he also does something more interesting. Having portrayed Sennacherib as the arch-enemy of Babylon, he goes on to describe how he went to war against the Greeks. Berossus quite literally plugs his Greek readers into Babylonian mythmaking about Assyria, with Sennacherib as the villain of the piece. Once Greeks and Babylonians have acquired a shared enemy, the Assyrian king builds Tarsus 'on the model of Babylon'. This is where the story begins to look familiar to Greek readers, but it is also the point at which it takes a particularly disquieting turn from a Mesopotamian perspective: Babylonian rulers ought to use their spoils to build up Babylon, not other cities. Least of all should they erect imitations of Babylon in the far West.²⁹ The Seleucids were themselves keen founders of cities, and there must have been a certain amount of unease about this activity in Babylonian quarters.³⁰ Berossus, it seems, used Greek traditions about Sardanapallus in order to express some of that very Babylonian anxiety.

²⁵ Dalley 1999.

²⁶ Burstein 1978: 24, n. 80; cf. de Breucker on Berossus fr. 7c *BNJ*, ad 'Tarson'.

²⁷ The proof text is Nabonidus' so-called *Babylon Stela*, 3.3^a col. 1 (Schaudig). For Sennacherib's destruction of Babylon and its significance in Assyrian and Babylonian historical discourse, see Van De Mieroop 2004.

²⁸ Berossus fr. 7 *BNJ*, Abydenus fr. 5 *BNJ*; cf. Kuhrt 1987: 54, who also points to the story of his murder at the hands of his own son.

²⁹ See de Breucker's commentary on Berossus fr. 7c *BNJ* ad 'likeness of Babylon', with reference to Chronicles No. 38, line 60 (Glassner); No. 39, lines 18–23 (Glassner); and *Persian Verse Account* col. 11, 28'–29' (Schaudig).

³⁰ De Breucker on Berossus fr. 7c *BNJ* ad 'likeness of Babylon'. Classical sources suggest that the foundation of Seleucia-Tigris brought about a catastrophic decline in the fortunes of Babylon. The reality was much less dramatic: Sherwin-White 1987: 18–20, Hauser 1999.

Nebuchadnezzar: romance

We have seen several ways in which Berossus reworked orientalisising tales about Mesopotamia: far from drawing a clear line between Babylonian history and Greek historical fiction, he strategically merged the two. A particularly striking example of this technique is Berossus' portrayal of King Nebuchadnezzar, who is the main protagonist of the *Babyloniaca*. Like Sennacherib, he rules over (most of) the world, but unlike his Assyrian counterpart he uses his power to strengthen and enrich the city of Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar's importance as a model king would have been evident to any Babylonian readers of Berossus: for them, he was a national hero.³¹ It would have been less obvious to Greeks, who could read about him neither in Ctesias nor Herodotus. Things changed under the Seleucids, with Megasthenes comparing Nebuchadnezzar favourably to Heracles.³² That comparison suggests that he was held up as a positive model for the Seleucid kings, who would have regarded Heracles as a natural point of reference. In the wake of Megasthenes, Berossus set about advertising Nebuchadnezzar to his Greek readers.³³ And in this context he wrote the little-known ruler into the favourite Greek legend about Babylon.

In fragment eight of the *Babyloniaca*, a passage of Josephus, Berossus records how Nebuchadnezzar returned to Babylon from his victorious campaign in the West. He enlarged the city and rebuilt its walls, gates, temples and palaces. As a final flourish, he built the Hanging Garden of Babylon for his homesick Median wife.³⁴ The garden, Berossus says, reminded her of the mountains of her native country. On the face of it, this is a strange story in a Babylonian work and Assyriologists have, understandably, been baffled by it.³⁵ There are at least three questions that need addressing before we can understand how and why Berossus came to include such a blatant piece of romance in his account of Babylonian history. First, where did he encounter the motif of the Hanging Garden, and what made it attractive to him? Second, what was at stake in the story

³¹ Nebuchadnezzar was held up as a model Babylonian king under Nabonidus (*Babylon Stela* and *Adad-guppi Stela*), Cyrus (*Persian Verse Account* P 1 col. vi, 8'–11' Schaudig), and Darius I (rebel kings take the throne name Nebuchadnezzar at *DB* col. 1, ch. 16 and col. iii, ch. 49); for the Seleucid evidence, see above, n. 12.

³² *FGrH* 715 F1. Megasthenes' claim may owe something to traditions about Nebuchadnezzar's siege of Tyre, imagined as the city of Heracles/Melqart.

³³ Kuhrt 1987; see also Reade 2000: 200, Beaulieu 2006.

³⁴ It has become common to refer to the 'Hanging Gardens of Babylon' (plural). Berossus uses the singular *παράδεισος*.

³⁵ Dalley 1994: 56 has declared it spurious. I have learned much from her discussion, but remain unconvinced that the passage is a later insertion; see also the remarks in van der Spek 2008: 311–12.

about Nebuchadnezzar and his homesick Iranian wife? And finally, why did Berossus name Nebuchadnezzar's wife Amyitis, daughter of Astyages? My contention is that Berossus inherited all these ingredients from Greek traditions, but that he reconfigured and mixed them to new effect – securing a prominent place for Nebuchadnezzar in the Greek imagination (and simultaneously establishing himself as a guide to the marvels of Babylon).

There is no trace of a Hanging Garden in Mesopotamian sources, and archaeologists have not been able to locate it either.³⁶ Did the building actually exist, even if the homesick queen was a fiction? One weak answer is that it certainly existed in the Greek imagination.³⁷ Although the extant sources are later than Berossus, the combined testimonies of Curtius and Diodorus suggest that already the Alexander historian Clitarchus had described it in some detail.³⁸ There is every reason to believe that it was known to Greeks of the early Hellenistic period, and that Berossus included it 'to cater to the interests of his Greek readers', as Stanley Burstein has argued.³⁹

Clitarchus also told the tale of the king and his homesick wife, though probably without naming them.⁴⁰ Royal couples are a prominent feature of Hellenistic literature, politics and culture.⁴¹ Callimachus' *Lock of Berenice* is a famous example, as is the novella of Antiochus I falling in love with his stepmother Stratonice.⁴² Nobody knows how old that story is, or how true. What it does show, however, is the importance of dynastic couples at every level of Seleucid culture. Even the *Antiochus Cylinder*, a traditional Babylonian building inscription, mentions Stratonice as queen and consort of Antiochus – entirely against the conventions of the genre.⁴³ In telling the story of the king who built a marvellous garden for his wife, Berossus seems once again to have catered to Greek taste. Moreover, by calling him Nebuchadnezzar, he created a prominent place for the Seleucids' favourite Babylonian ruler in the imagination of his Greek readers. Dressed in the garb of an orientalising legend, Nebuchadnezzar came to embody the desire of Seleucid Greeks for a glorious oriental past, with all the nostalgia, voyeurism (historical and otherwise) and sheer delight in exotic role-play which that exercise involved.

³⁶ For detailed discussion, see Bichler and Rollinger 2005. ³⁷ Brodersen 1996: 56.

³⁸ Bonquet 1987: 95–6, Prandi 1996: 122–4, Bichler and Rollinger 2005: 169–70. Van der Spek 2008: 307–9 considers the possibility that it was already in Ctesias. For a suggestion that it was known in Mesopotamia when the Greeks arrived there, see de Breucker's commentary on Berossus fr. 8 *BNJ* ad 'Hanging Garden'. For Clitarchus' account predating that of Berossus, see Bosworth 1997.

³⁹ Burstein 1978: 27, n. 106. ⁴⁰ Bichler and Rollinger 2005: 169–70. ⁴¹ Ogden 1999.

⁴² For the *Lock of Berenice* and its Ptolemaic context, see Gutzwiller 1992. For the novella of Antiochus and Stratonice, see Lightfoot 2003: 373–9.

⁴³ *Antiochus Cylinder* col. ii. 21–9; for discussion, see Kuhrt and Sherwin-White 1991: 83–5.

It remains to be seen what we should make of Nebuchadnezzar's home-sick wife. Berossus calls her Amytis, daughter of Astyages.⁴⁴ This Amytis, it turns out – or rather a princess called Amytis, without the first 'i' – is a major figure in Ctesias. In a context where Berossus has already signalled his engagement with Ctesias, that can hardly be coincidence. Indeed, the two princesses quickly turn out to share similar roles in their respective narratives. Ctesias introduces his Amytis as the daughter of Astyages, last king of the Medes. She marries Cyrus after her father's defeat and helps him secure the eastern parts of his empire.⁴⁵ Amytis makes possible the transition from one Asiatic empire (that of the Medes) to another (that of the Persians). Her role is overtly dynastic: at one point, Ctesias describes her dowry as being quite literally the whole of Media – to marry this woman is to take over as king of Asia.⁴⁶ Amytis plays an analogous role in Berossus, though some details differ. According to Berossus, she married Nebuchadnezzar, not Cyrus. So, Amytis for him marked the transition from Assyrian to Babylonian domination, via the Medes, as it were.⁴⁷ The timing of the marriage is significant too: it happens just before the fall of Nineveh, anticipating the transition from Assyrian to Babylonian rule which that event entails.

Berossus' Greek readers may well have wondered where the Median empire had gone in all this, since it was so familiar to them from Herodotus and Ctesias. They may even have worried about Berossus' chronology: a daughter of Astyages ought to have lived some fifty years after Nebuchadnezzar. Modern scholars too are troubled by the anachronism, but we should not assume that upsetting the chronology of the Median royal family by a few decades was something that would have worried Berossus.⁴⁸ What did worry him (and, one suspects, his Seleucid patrons) was the marginal role of Babylon and its rulers in earlier Greek accounts of Mesopotamian history. In order to address that problem, Berossus needed to replace the accepted succession of empires, Assyria – Media – Persia, with a scheme that centred around Nebuchadnezzar's Babylon. The Median princess Amytis helped him to achieve his aim in at least two ways: first, she enabled him to cast Nebuchadnezzar as the rightful heir to Assyria by drawing on Ctesias' account of Amytis and her role in the succession of empires; second, she helped him establish Nebuchadnezzar as a model for the Seleucids

⁴⁴ Berossus fr. 7d *BNJ*. ⁴⁵ Ctesias fr. 9, 1–2 (Lenfant).

⁴⁶ Ctesias fr. 8d (Lenfant). ⁴⁷ Berossus fr. 7d *BNJ*.

⁴⁸ We know from other passages that Berossus was perfectly capable of distorting known historical facts. For example, he exaggerated the extent of the Neo-Babylonian empire, claiming that Egypt was a Babylonian province under Nebuchadnezzar (fr. 8 *BNJ*).

by linking him to the romantic tale of the Mesopotamian king who built the Hanging Garden for his Iranian wife.

Conclusion

Many contributions to this volume look at romance motifs entering Greece from the East. The case of Berossus is quite the reverse. I have argued that he responds creatively to Greek as well as Babylonian and, perhaps, Iranian story traditions, offering us not a Greek reception of eastern romances, but a Graeco-Babylonian reception of Greek romantic narratives about the East.

Berossus promised a clean slate when he claimed to have based his entire account on the ancient archives of Babylon. In practice, a clean slate was neither possible nor desirable: Berossus knew full well that his readers came to his work with specific cultural preconceptions. Ctesias and the Alexander historians were the most popular writers on Mesopotamia in his time, and it made sense that Berossus should work closely with them. However, they were also notorious for fictionalising their accounts.⁴⁹ In writing back to them, Berossus did not simply aim to convince the new rulers that current thinking about his city was flawed. He did take a firm stance on Semiramis, complaining that accounts of her building works in Babylon were simply false. But Ctesias had to be proved wrong on that occasion not because he *was* wrong, but because Berossus needed to project a specific image of himself, his city and its rulers. As far as historical facts were concerned, he was surprisingly flexible. For example, he took the Sardanapallus of popular Greek fiction and split him into three: one Assyrian ruler took the name, another took the story of the king on the pyre, the third and most important got the story of Sardanapallus in Cilicia. Berossus manipulated these traditions strategically, in order to offer a new perspective on imperial history and, ultimately, on the role of the Greek conquerors in that history.

The tale about Nebuchadnezzar and his marvellous garden is a case in point. It would have spoken powerfully to Greek readers brought up on the Alexander historians and Ctesias, and perhaps also to Iranian readers. Antiochus himself was half Greek and half Iranian: he was the most prominent result of Alexander's politics of merging those two worlds. Berossus shows some interest in Iranian religion, language and customs, so perhaps

⁴⁹ Ctesias and Clitarchus in particular were much criticised for their inventiveness; see Lenfant 2004: CLXIII–CLXVI, Prandi 1996: 53–5.

he was specifically addressing Hellenised Iranian readers.⁵⁰ Whether his *Babyloniaca* was also intended for Babylonian readers – and, if so, what they might have made of his creative responses to the culture of their conquerors – is an important question, which cannot be adequately explored within the remit of this short contribution. Certainly, if fellow Babylonians read Berossus' *Babyloniaca*, they will have known Greek and will therefore have been able, at least in part, to assess Berossus' delicate act of cultural mediation.

⁵⁰ Cf. Berossus frs. 11, 23a *BNJ*; the figure of Amytis/Amyitis may ultimately go back to Iranian traditions.

*The Greek novel Ninus and Semiramis
Its background in Assyrian and Seleucid history
and monuments*

Stephanie Dalley

The tradition of studying Greek and Roman novels matured at a time when Semiramis was considered to be entirely fictional, more than two centuries before cuneiform scripts and languages began to be deciphered,¹ and when no fragments of the novel *Ninus and Semiramis* were known. Real information about the Assyrian empire emerged gradually from the late nineteenth century onwards, and is still emerging. As more cuneiform texts have come to light, some of them quite recently, giving contemporary accounts of great events in Assyrian history, they have allowed a much more securely based interpretation of some later traditions attached to the names of genuine Assyrian kings, queens and counsellors. Some stone monuments of those characters have proved to be visible in Assyrian capital cities that were still inhabited at a time when Greek novels featuring Assyrian men and women were composed or became popular. A late Seleucid revival continuing into the Parthian period is known for instance at Assur and Nineveh, from archaeological evidence. Not least are the inscriptions on stone of a *strategos* and of Eutyche on a statue base, both found at Nineveh.²

In examining the group of traditions attached to the names Ninus and Semiramis, and the Assyrian background to early romances, I have three main foci. One is the genuine historical background of Sammu-ramat, the Assyrian queen whose name in Greek tradition was Semiramis. Her factual existence can be contrasted with a lack of historical background for Ninus. Some quite recent analysis, showing that later Assyrian queens were all referred to under the name Semiramis by Greek writers,³ strengthens the understanding that a romantic story of this kind 'is played out within the interstices of real history'.⁴ Another focus, directed at the several languages and scripts in which early romance-type compositions were written, has

¹ Vasunia, this volume. ² Reade 1998: 69 and 70–1; figs. 3, 5 and 6.

³ Dalley 2005. ⁴ Morgan 2007a: 554.

been dealt with in more detail in the chapter by Ian Rutherford. It demonstrates the polyglot novelistic literature in a cosmopolitan background from which Greek novels emerged. A third focus is directed towards the cities Hierapolis-Membidj, Antioch, Tarsus and Aphrodisias in Caria, because they are places especially notable for incorporating Ninus and Semiramis into their art and their city traditions.

Actual history

If you were an Assyrian in the eighth century BC you would be familiar with the historical Assyrian queen Sammu-ramat, daughter-in-law of Shalmaneser III, wife of Shamshi-Adad V and mother of Adad-nirari III (but probably not co-regent with him).⁵ At that time Nimrud, ancient Kalah on the Tigris, was the main city of royal residence. You would know that she in person, contrary to the custom of queens at that time, joined her son in a campaign in the vicinity of Aleppo, with the result that her own name was inscribed on a royal stele as partner in heroism with her son the king. The text, found on the Upper Euphrates in Turkey, was first published in 1990.⁶ Her fame during her lifetime is confirmed by the existence of another stela, inscribed only with her name and titles, found at the city Assur on the Tigris, and first published in 1913.⁷ Her stela (and perhaps also that of Naqia-Zakutu, the second wife of Sennacherib)⁸ stood among a group of similar stelae all bearing the names of kings and high male officials. She is also named alongside her son in a dedicatory inscription, composed by the governor of Nimrud, for a new temple to the god Nabu.⁹

I have argued elsewhere¹⁰ that the name Sammu-ramat in its Graecised form Semiramis became an archetype and was therefore applied not only to that historical queen, but also to later, historical Assyrian queens of great repute. In particular Naqia-Zakutu, second wife of Sennacherib, resembles the historical Sammu-ramat because she also had her name on public inscriptions written during her lifetime, and because both appear from their names to be foreign wives. The role, or plight, of the foreign woman marrying a king far from home afforded rich material for the novelist. Also relevant here are those texts that refer to Naqia's personal interest in the

⁵ Kuhrt 1995: 491. Cf. Reardon 2008: 804.

⁶ Grayson 1996: 204–5.

⁷ Grayson 1996: 226.

⁸ A writing of her name as Zakutu without the female determinative may be readable on Stele no. 4 from Assur, despite the reservations of Frahm 1997: 184–5.

⁹ Grayson 1996: 226–7. ¹⁰ Dalley 2005. See also Melville 1999.

administration of Babylon under her son the Assyrian king Esarhaddon, who ruled from Nineveh.¹¹ In the ninth to early eighth century BC when the historical Sammu-ramat lived, the Assyrians did not rule Babylon, and so she cannot have been involved in the restoration of Babylon, a feat ascribed to Semiramis in Diodorus Siculus. Diodorus Siculus mentions 'bronze images of Ninus and Semiramis', set on a palace wall; this possibly corresponds to the bronze panels with depictions in low relief of Naqia with either her son Esarhaddon, or her grandson Ashurbanipal.¹² In the case of Naqia we thus have a group of material that shows the likely accretion of her deeds, nearly two centuries later, to the name of Semiramis.

With knowledge of extant inscriptions from the lifetimes of Sammu-ramat and of Naqia, it is a secure claim that some elements in stories of Semiramis arose from a historical background in the Neo-Assyrian period, just as the *Hebrew Book of Esther*¹³ and the story of Aḥiqar¹⁴ are associated with the same period. Although the Aramaic story of Aḥiqar does not involve any females in the extant versions, we may suggest that the Assyrian queen Naqia was involved in banishing him: for with her support Esarhaddon had taken the Assyrian throne from his half-brother, was implicated in the murder of his own father and eventually took huge reprisals on most of his top officials, as is recorded in a Chronicle entry: 'The eleventh year, in Assyria, the king (Esarhaddon) executed a large number of his nobles'.¹⁵ Ultimately, therefore, Aḥiqar's exile and imprisonment could be blamed on the queen Naqia, who was a 'Semiramis'.

In my study of 2005, concentrated upon Assyrian sources, I did not consider the Seleucid period; but this is an opportunity to add another member to the 'Semiramis' archetype, certainly to be identified in Stratonice, wife of Seleucus I and mother of Antiochus I Soter. Her name is joined with that of Antiochus on the cylinder inscription from Borsippa, recording rebuilding work on the great temple Ezida, as well as referring to building work in Babylon.¹⁶ The concluding sentence in that text is the one that names her:

O Nabu, first son, when you enter Ezida the true house, may favour
for Antiochus king of lands, and favour for Seleucus the king his son,
and Stratonice his chosen wife, the queen, be set in your utterance.

¹¹ Melville 1999: ch. 4.

¹² Diod. Sic. 2.8.8. The panel, now in the Louvre AO 20.185, is illustrated e.g. in Melville 1999, p. 26, fig.1.

¹³ Dalley 2007. ¹⁴ Schürer 1986: 232–6. ¹⁵ Glassner 2004: 209.

¹⁶ Kuhrt and Sherwin-White 1991.

In this inscription, contemporary with the events it records, the word used for 'queen' is the one normally reserved for goddesses. As with Sammuramat and Naqia-Zakutu, special piety is directed towards the god Nabu. She was thus closely associated with the very temple in Borsippa where three centuries earlier Naqia had made her own dedications.¹⁷

The legendary Semiramis is credited with building the original temple to Atargatis in Membidj-Hierapolis, and Stratonice is credited with restoring it, in the story attributed to Lucian of Samosata (c. AD 115–180).¹⁸ In this respect, Stratonice deliberately put herself into the shoes of her illustrious predecessor Semiramis; and in *The Syrian Goddess* Stratonice is called 'the wife of the Assyrian king'. Already Alexander the Great had taken Semiramis as one of his models from earlier legend,¹⁹ so the idea was an obvious one for early Seleucid rulers.

The understanding that Stratonice belongs with the archetype of powerful Assyrian queenship that went under the name Semiramis accounts for the mention of elephants used on a military campaign, both in Diodorus Siculus²⁰ and in fragment B of the novel, since the cuneiform astronomical diary for 274/3 BC records that twenty elephants, which the king had received in Babylon as a gift from the ruler of Bactria, were sent to help the king on campaign.²¹ No Assyrian campaign refers to elephants. The identification might also account for the emphasis of Diodorus on buildings erected in Babylon by 'Semiramis', alongside the deeds of Naqia; and it accounts for the mention of Oxyartes king of Bactria by Diodorus,²² for Stratonice's husband Antiochus I lived a while in Bactria before succeeding to the throne of his father. Oxyartes' historical contribution of elephants is especially relevant for identifying 'Semiramis' with Stratonice in part of the account given by Diodorus.

In view of the evident need for Antiochus to insert himself into the prestigious royal traditions of Mesopotamia, it is but a small step to see Stratonice as yet another manifestation of Semiramis, associated in the temple at Borsippa with the second 'Semiramis', Naqia, and at Hierapolis. All, even Stratonice, were supposedly wives of 'Assyrian' kings. The story of Stratonice's loves, as told by Lucian in the late second century AD, has potential for identifying themes in *Ninus and Semiramis*, should we ever find more of the text.

¹⁷ Melville 1999: 54–5. ¹⁸ Lightfoot 2003: 373–9.

¹⁹ Yardley 1997: 268, quoting Nearchus *apud* Arr. *Anab.* 6.24.2–3 and Strab. 15.1.5.

²⁰ Diod. Sic. 2.17–20. ²¹ Sachs and Hunger 1988: 344–7. ²² Diod. Sic. 2.6.2.

However, it is not the case that the name of Ninus can be associated with an Assyrian king, despite the attempt of König to show that he was Sargon II,²³ and the claim of Lawrence Kim.²⁴ It seems almost certain that Ninus' name comes from the city name Nineveh as a legendary eponymous founder. But it is a Greek custom (and a Hittite one)²⁵ to derive the name of a founder from the name of a city; in Mesopotamia it was the gods themselves who founded cities, and there are no examples of eponymous, human founders. This distinction implies that any story featuring the character Ninus contains a Greek element rather than a Near Eastern one, and suggests that a purely fictional Ninus was found as a suitable partner for Semiramis. The name Simmas given to the surrogate mother of the infant Semiramis, is indeed, as Ctesias (via Diodorus Siculus) says, derived from the word *simmatul/summatu* meaning a dove in Akkadian. This derivation might imply that the character and part of the story emanated from an Akkadian-speaking environment, or an Aramaic-speaking one in which the local word was still used, for it has no cognate known in Aramaic.²⁶ Certainly the word-play does not work in Greek, which is why Diodorus had to point out its significance.²⁷

The mention of Ninus by Ctesias in the Achaemenid period shows that the invention of the character is earlier than the late fifth century BC, long before Stratonice rebuilt the temple of Atargatis at Membidj in the Seleucid period. Stratonice's contribution to rebuilding works at Borsippa and Babylon date to 268 BC.²⁸ Already in Ctesias' time some of the characteristics of the later, 'Hellenistic' novel were emerging from biographical passages, namely exceptional beauty, endurance and courage; explicit references to the love life of the protagonists; and a main role played by a female. Fragment B of *Ninus and Semiramis* shares some themes with Xenophon's *Anabasis*: a Greek contingent marching through Armenia, ice and snow in the mountains of Armenia which comes and goes with unseasonal rapidity, difficulties in crossing rivers. The heroic career of Ninus²⁹ at the foundation of the Assyrian empire can be contrasted with the decadent character attributed to the legendary Sardanapallus at the downfall of the same empire.

Seleucus, Antiochus and Stratonice deliberately inserted themselves into legend as part of a strategy to show themselves as founders of a new historical epoch, a strategy also manifest in their creation of a new era for

²³ König 1972: 34–7. ²⁴ Kim 2008: 146. ²⁵ Uchitel 1999: 55–68.

²⁶ According to Von Soden 1972: s.v. *summatu*.

²⁷ Diod. Sic. 2.4.4.

²⁸ Kuhrt and Sherwin-White 1991: 77.

²⁹ See Millard 1998–2001 Band 9 s.v. Ninos.

dating, 311 BC being ‘year 1’ of the Seleucid era. This innovation might be contrasted with another view, that history began with the legendary Ninus and Semiramis according to the history of Pompeius Trogus. But if we consider Stratonice as a Semiramis, the two views are harmonised. Trogus thus seems to have adopted a scheme from Seleucid policy.

A polyglot environment

Several heroic, novelistic compositions set in the late Assyrian period are now known from papyri, and are discussed elsewhere in this volume. The *Tale of Assurbanipal and Šamaš-šum-ukin* includes events quite closely related to those given on Prism K of Assurbanipal, a seventh-century text found in Assyria, but which, given the Babylonian interest of its contents, may have circulated in Babylonia too.³⁰

Also referring to historical events of the seventh century BC is the Egyptian Demotic story of the *Struggle for the Weapons of Inaros*, set in the time of Esarhaddon’s invasion of Egypt, liberating it from Nubian rule. The names of kings in cities of the Delta are recognisable from Late Assyrian inscriptions of Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal.³¹ The *Struggle for the Weapons of Inaros* names Esarhaddon, likewise giving a seventh-century BC context. Already mentioned is the story of *Egyptians and Amazons* with its pseudo-historical setting no later than the seventh century. It engages with events based on Assyrian power at Nineveh; but mention of Bactria refers to events no earlier than the reign of Darius I, and possibly as late as that of Antiochus I. All these stories show the prevalence of a semi-historical or pseudo-historical background to Assyrian events of the eighth to seventh centuries BC, with references to later time. The languages and scripts include Akkadian in cuneiform script; Aramaic in its linear alphabetic script as well as written in Egyptian Demotic script; Hebrew; and Egyptian. In the case of the *Hebrew Book of Esther*, we have a story that was once known in Aramaic and Elamite,³² was preserved in Hebrew and was translated with considerable changes into Greek. By contrast with Assyrian rulers, Babylonian kings are found in legendary texts written on papyri much more rarely.

Recently a possible connection between Esarhaddon’s mother as a ‘Semiramis’ and a legendary queen of Nineveh has been suggested, from an Egyptian Demotic text written on a papyrus fragment, in which an Assyrian ‘army of the men of the Left’ (cf. Assyrian *turtānu bīt šumēli*, ‘general of

³⁰ Harmatta 1971. ³¹ Hoffmann and Quack 2007: 59–87, and p. 64 with note 92.

³² Dalley, 2007: 165–7, 183.

the house of the Left') campaigns in Egypt against Pharaoh Taharqa, in the reign of Esarhaddon who is named as son of Sennacherib.³³ The action takes place in the vicinity of Tanis. The episode may be linked to the Demotic tale known as *Petechons and Sarpot* or *Egyptians and Amazons*, in which the bellicose queen Sarpot rules from Nineveh.³⁴ Although a suggestion by Zauzich that Sarpot may be an Egyptian rendering of the name Sammuramat/Semiramis is questionable,³⁵ he identifies in a historical event of 674 BC the background in which the story is set. This date would favour identifying Sarpot as a character based on that of Naqia-Zakutu.

As for the countries involved in stories about Semiramis, several periods can be distinguished by linking particular details to known campaigns. The expedition to Armenia named in papyrus fragment B of *Ninus and Semiramis* can be linked to campaigns against the country of Urartu, whether the famous expedition of Sargon II in 714 BC, or that of Cyrus the Great in 547 BC.³⁶ The country was called Armenia in the Achaemenid period. The Indians in Diodorus Siculus' account of an expedition led by Ninus and Semiramis can be understood as reflecting a real campaign against Elam in the mid-seventh century.³⁷ The introduction of elephants can be understood as a later updating, found in Diodorus Siculus and in fragment B, linked to Stratonice as a 'Semiramis' and to the historical campaign with elephants of her royal husband in the third century BC. Travel to distant lands is a characteristic of Greek novels such as *Ninus and Semiramis* and *Callirhoe*, reflecting the military campaigns of great kings of the Near East.

This background of stories with an Assyrian semi-historical background, updated and embroidered, told in Aramaic and Egyptian, may allow us to understand why Ctesias wrote as he did, having heard the stories in languages other than Greek, and perhaps having misunderstood their fictional qualities because of the semi-historical element. The selection of extracts made by Photius may have contributed to misunderstanding.³⁸ But Ctesias has also been shown to transfer historical events from their factual backgrounds to new contexts, with different protagonists.³⁹

Late survivals of monuments

Archaeological work at Nimrud has shown that a Hellenistic 'village' – a town which imported the world's best wine, manufactured glass and used

³³ Hoffmann and Quack, 2007, pp. 107–17. ³⁴ See Ryholt, this volume.

³⁵ Zauzich 2010: 449. I am grateful to Prof. Mark Smith for his caution.

³⁶ Rollinger 2008.

³⁷ Dalley 2003: 183. See also Dalley 2007, ch. 3.

³⁸ Lenfant 2004.

³⁹ Bichler 2004.

silver coinage⁴⁰ – had links with Syria and Antioch that were stronger than those with Babylonia. The cuneiform inscription set up by a governor of Nimrud with Sammu-ramat was still there, along with other Assyrian monuments, when it was eventually excavated in our own times.

As in the 44-volume *Universal History* of Pompeius Trogus, written in Augustan Rome,⁴¹ the two legendary Assyrian figures Ninus and Semiramis began the history of the Persians, according to Ctesias in the late classical period. They were therefore ideal to be adopted as legendary founders of Aphrodisias in Caria, where the basilica built c. 100 AD displayed panels of its famous heroes including Ninus and Semiramis. The city, previously called Lelegopolis, then Megale polis, was later known as Ninoe.⁴² The adoption implied that the city existed from the very beginning of historical time. By that time nobody would have been able to read cuneiform, which would have acquired the mystique of ancient, inscrutable wisdom. So the novel of Ninus and Semiramis could claim a link with the earliest historical time.⁴³

In considering how Assyrian characters of the eighth to seventh centuries BC were quite well known, relative to Babylonian characters of the sixth century, we need to take into account the temple that Sennacherib built in Tarsus, as described by Berossus, because the evidence of iconography on coins and terracottas shows that the temple with its statues continued into the Roman imperial period.⁴⁴ The original fame of Nineveh, together with its revival in the Seleucid period, helps to account for those cities that named themselves Ninoe, claiming an eponymous but non-historical Ninus as founder, linked to a legendary Semiramis whose monuments were still extant. The prime examples of other ‘Ninevehs’ are Membidj-Hierapolis, which became known as Ninoe, and Aphrodisias in Caria.

Two mosaics dated c. 200 AD, showing a scene from Ninus and Semiramis, one found in a villa near Antioch in Syria, the other at Alexandretta in the same region,⁴⁵ suggest a particular popularity for the novel (or for theatrical performances based upon it) in that area, not far from Tarsus.

A characteristic of the historical queens whose lives were subsumed into the archetypal Semiramis is their strength as builders and conquerors. None of them is a boy-meets-girl love story. All are powerful players in the world of politics and warfare. According to normal Mesopotamian tradition, it was the prerogative of the ruler to build public monuments, and those queens are exceptions. Such an exceptional character, I suspect, was interesting to

⁴⁰ Mallowan 1975: 1: 287. ⁴¹ See Yardley 1997: 22–6. ⁴² Yildirim 2004: 23–52.

⁴³ See also Ní Mheallaigh, this volume. ⁴⁴ Dalley 1999: 73–80. ⁴⁵ Levi 1944.

Greeks for whom eastern rule was exercised by a single, dominant ruler influenced, sometimes successfully, by his womenfolk. Should a great king marry a woman for love, or were pragmatic dynastic marriages better for stable rule and firm government? What part, if any, should ideally be allowed to women? In Greek democracy women played no part. In several of the Greek novels, the controlling institutions of palace and temple are absent; the characters move through exotic lands free to follow their passions and ambitions.

The inclusion of Stratonice in the image of a Semiramis weakens the case for interpreting novels with an Assyrian background as a focus for anti-Greek rule, as Martin Braun suggested, and Susan Stephens was inclined to deny.⁴⁶ More likely, in my view, is a relationship of some romances to carnivals: a festival of Aphrodite for Chariton's *Chaereas and Callirhoe* where the lovers first meet, and a festival of Artemis for the setting of the beginning and end of the story in *Habrocomes and Antheia*. The *Hebrew Book of Esther* is integrally linked to the carnival-type feast of Purim. A festival based upon a Babylonian or Assyrian version of the traditional New Year Festival was celebrated at Palmyra, where a fine frieze showed the triumph (in Roman dress) over the sea of chaos,⁴⁷ and probably also at Hierapolis-Membidj.⁴⁸ But I doubt that one can claim a carnival connection for all the compositions.

The stories with a vaguely Assyrian historical background mainly have no particular love interest of the boy-meets-girl kind. This is not because such a theme was taboo in Assyrian literature: there are very explicitly erotic *Love Lyrics*, which were recited in rites of Ishtar of Babylon.⁴⁹ I would like to make a suggestion as to why the erotic element was introduced into the genre (if we can call it that). The carnival element involves dressing up, pretending to be another person or disguising one's true nature, often behaving 'badly' in a theatrical way. Tomas Hägg suggested that the mosaics found near Antioch and at Alexandretta may have illustrated a theatrical performance,⁵⁰ and one might invoke a similar connection for the wall-painting depicting a scene from the story of Esther at Dura Europus, because we know that rude theatrical events were often a part of Purim celebrations.

With reference to Iamblichus' *Babylonian Story*, we note that a medical writer of the fourth century AD recommended reading it as a stimulant for sexual impotence. Thinking back to the *Love Lyrics*, and to the

⁴⁶ Braun 1938; Stephens 2008: 69. ⁴⁷ Tubach 1995; Dalley 1995: 137. ⁴⁸ Dalley forthcoming.

⁴⁹ Nissinen 1998; Lambert 1987; Leick 1994: 239–46. ⁵⁰ Hägg 1983: 18.

Mesopotamian king's obligation to perform the act of love each year with a priestess (who may have been his daughter) at the New Year Festival, replicating the first act of reproductive creation, I wonder if those texts were likewise used as a stimulant, with the function of promoting heterosexual acts. I was reminded of a city ordinance passed in Venice in the late fifteenth century, where homosexual acts became so prevalent that prostitutes were ordered to walk bare-breasted, in the hope of discouraging homosexual acts.⁵¹ Rulers who go to war need an endless supply of young men, and only heterosexual relationships produce them.

Given that sexuality and/or female chastity plays so little if any role in the early stories that have an Assyrian historical background, yet so great a role in Greek and Roman novels, and given that those early stories are linked to real members of a royal family whereas the Greek and Roman novels often put purely fictional characters in leading roles, it has become clear to me that we cannot define the novel of antiquity in a way that suits the early stories just as well as the later ones. A major development has taken place. Behaviour at court is a theme that has no role in a Greek-style democracy; the role of women in imperial government is a theme of interest to Greek philosophers; the promotion of heterosexuality in a society where sodomy was acceptable: all may be motivations that came and went, linked to the popularity of these tales.

Conclusions

The romance of Ninus and Semiramis can be loosely connected to a genuine historical background in Assyria. In the works of some Greek and Roman historians, the pair represented the very beginning of historical time, the rise of the earliest empire in the Near East. Themes of passion, a strong woman in control of an army, a marriage of a king to a foreign woman, links to imposing ancient monuments, exotic travels: all these aspects intrigued the Hellenistic and Roman world, and attracted the citizens of Aphrodisias to model one of their founding legends around the two main characters whose personal relationship, power and energy had set off a train of empires.

⁵¹ For the ancient world, see Theodorus Priscianus *Euporiston* 2.11, who cites Iamblichus, Philip of Amphipolis and Herodian as cures for impotence. I thank Tim Whitmarsh for this reference.

*Ctesias, the Achaemenid court, and the history of the Greek novel**

Josef Wiesehöfer

Introductory remarks

A book of Ctesias of Cnidus was read, the *History of Persia* (*ta Persika*), in 23 books. In the first six books Ctesias deals with Assyrian history and everything that predated Persian history. From book seven onwards, however, he gives a detailed account of Persian history and in his books seven, eight, ten, eleven, twelve and thirteen he describes the history of Cyrus, Cambyses and the Magus, and Darius and Xerxes – and this differs from the *Histories* of Herodotus in almost every way. And he exposes Herodotus as a liar in many matters and calls him a writer of fables (*logopoios*). And he is later than him. He says that he was an eyewitness (*autoptes*) of most of the things he recounts or that, when it was not possible for him to see, he made sure that he personally heard accounts from Persians themselves and that this is how he wrote his history (*historian syngrapsai*). He not only writes things that are at odds with Herodotus, but in various places he disagrees also with Xenophon, son of Gryllus. He was in his prime in the time of Cyrus, son of Darius and Parysatis, the brother of Artaxerxes upon whom the Persian kingship devolved. (Photius, *Library* 72 p. 35b35–36a6 (T8 Lenfant); quoted after Llewellyn-Jones/Robson 2010: 100)

It has often been stressed, rightly, that – aside from the history of Greek-Oriental contact – the Achaemenid court is the main topic of Ctesias' oeuvre,¹ introduced to us in the quotation above by the Byzantine epitomator Photius. This focus has been ascribed to the court being Ctesias' principal place of residence, which would make the author, a doctor from Cnidus, an eyewitness. Thus it does not come as a surprise that in modern accounts of the Achaemenid court, Ctesias has often been quoted as a

* This is partly a greatly revised and extended English version of Wiesehöfer 2011. For older treatments of the topic, cf. Sancisi-Weerdenburg 1987 and Briant 1989. In recent years, three major works on Ctesias have been published: Llewellyn-Jones and Robson 2010; Stronk 2010; Wiesehöfer, Rollinger and Lanfranchi 2011. See now also Madreiter 2012.

¹ For the Achaemenid court, see Rollinger and Wiesehöfer 2009 and the articles in Jacobs and Rollinger 2010.

principal source for events at and the institutions of that specific court. Nevertheless, modern scholarship rightly distinguishes between the characteristic features and institutions of the Persian court described by Ctesias and others, and the Ctesianic representation and assessment of these marks and institutions.² It has been agreed that the Greek author tried to draw a specific image of the Persian court that is defined by violence, intrigues and a weak monarch.

One must keep in mind that Ctesias' main work bears the title *Persika* and describes the sequence of three world empires of the East in twenty-three books: the Assyrian, the Median and the Persian empires, from the legendary creation of the first by Ninus and Semiramis till the eighth regnal year of Artaxerxes II. However, the main focus is on Persian history, the story of which amounts to seventeen books, in contrast to three books apiece on Assyrian and Median history. The Persian section of the work might already have been in circulation as a separate book in antiquity. Scholars normally date its publication to between 393 and 385 BCE. If Ctesias did not stay at the Persian court – we shall consider that problem later on – then the years after 398/7, i.e., the eighth regnal year of Artaxerxes II, would also be possible. Since we can still not be certain about the origin and dates of publication of the many books on Persian history or institutions of the late fifth and early fourth century BCE, we are still unable to reconstruct the wider literary context.

The original text of the *Persika* is lost apart from four smaller direct quotations. The work's main and most direct way of tradition is via the epitome of the Byzantine patriarch Photius, published in the ninth century CE, and already mentioned above. Other important transmitters of the tradition are Diodorus, Nicolaus Damascenus and Plutarch. However, with all of them we have to reckon with a relatively high degree of distortion of the original because of their specific personal taste and intentions.

A large international conference on Ctesias, which took place close to Kiel in 2006 and whose proceedings were published in 2011,³ was dominated by discussion of the question whether Ctesias has any right to be called an eyewitness of contemporary Persian conditions. During the conference Marco Dorati and others pointed out not only that in Ctesias there are remarkable parallels to the biography of the Greek doctor Democedes of Croton handed down to us by Herodotus,⁴ but also that there is no literary or epigraphic support at all for all the biographic details of Ctesias' life outside the *Persika* itself, except one very short disputed quote

² Briant 2002: 256. ³ Wiese Höfer, Rollinger and Lanfranchi 2011.

⁴ Dorati 1995; 2011; for the relationship between Ctesias and Herodotus, see the different views of Bichler 2004 and Bleckmann 2007.

in Xenophon (An. 1.8.26f. (T 6aβ Lenfant): ‘Ctesias the doctor also says that he treated the wound himself. . . Ctesias relates how many men in the King’s entourage died; for he was with him.’). Fourth-century orators and historians simply ignore Ctesias, even when they are dealing with questions Ctesias claims to have been involved in.⁵ In this chapter, however, I shall attempt an analysis that may lead us to a reappraisal of Ctesias’ view of the Achaemenid court, and may also yield additional clues in the aforesaid debate on the historicity of the author’s stay in the Persian Empire (as well as bearing on the question of the original version of the *Persika*).⁶ Even so, questions arise: how much information about the court does Ctesias present; what specifically marks this information as Ctesianic; and what intention underlies the author’s presentation of this information? To answer those questions, it is necessary, first, to consider the court as an historical phenomenon. For that, the model of an ‘ideal type’ of court might be a useful yardstick against which the specifically Ctesianic Persian court may be measured. This model has been created with the help of research on mediaeval and early modern European courts, and has been briefly summarised by Aloys Winterling quite recently.⁷ Ctesias cannot, of course, be expected to sketch the entire panorama of such an ideal court. However, it will nevertheless be informative to see what characteristic features of a court he does describe and assess, and which he mentions only in passing or not at all.

Apart from the problem of the literary genre of Ctesias’ work (see below), our author, with his ‘romanticised’ Persian and Indian ‘histories’ and his ‘novelistically thrilling and touching stories’⁸, has sometimes been called a forerunner of the Greek novelists.⁹ My article is also intended to contribute to both these debates.

The court

One might first define ‘court’ – with Winterling – as ‘the extended “household” of a monarch’, i.e. as a ‘spatial, material, social, economic and stately unit’ of a person who is ‘able to claim successfully “political” rule, exceeding that over his own “household” and competing nobles and to dispose thereby monopoly-like of socially rare goods like power, honour and wealth’.¹⁰ The

⁵ In contrast to Dorati and others, Lenfant 2004: vii–xxii; Stronk 2010: 3–15 and Llewellyn-Jones 2010: 7–17 all are convinced of Ctesias’ status as an eyewitness.

⁶ Cf. the caveat of Stronk (2010: 34f.).

⁷ Winterling 2004; Hirschbiegel 2010. Ancient courts have become a major topic of research in the last few years: see Spawforth 2007; Jacobs and Rollinger 2010; Potter and Talbert 2011.

⁸ Bichler 2007b: 477. ⁹ Cf. e.g. Holzberg 1992b: 84; 1996: 629–32. ¹⁰ Winterling 2004: 78–9.

royal 'household' exceeds other aristocratic 'houses' not least because it contains (whether permanently or temporarily) numerous people 'who do not belong to that "household" in the original sense of the word'. The original and extended circle of people are responsible for the fact 'that the social relations at a court differ from those of noble "households" by specific structures of communication and organisation as well as by its functions in a general social context'.¹¹

When we turn to the Ctesianic Persian court, then, the following aspects are to be taken into consideration: a) the way in which the court manifests itself materially, as an 'itinerant' or a 'fixed' palace (residence); b) the presence of different groups of people at court (which may vary over time): how is the group of people closest to the ruler recruited, and of what members does it consist?; c) the communicative structure of the court, not least the role of royal 'favour' and the subjects' opportunism; d) the function of the court in the context of political decision-making and monarchic representation; e) the significance of the court as a place where rank may be manifested for a wider social context.¹²

The Ctesianic Persian court

It comes as no surprise that most Ctesianic remarks on the Achaemenid court are located in that part of the text for which the author claims first-hand testimony. For this reason the main focus of my analysis will be on the time of Artaxerxes II.

The 'stationary' and the 'itinerant court'

Despite Ctesias' claims to have resided both at the stationary and the itinerant court,¹³ there is (surprisingly) no observation that one can test archaeologically, or which might be of some evidentiary value for the material structure of a palace or a residence. This applies equally to all the substantial residences, of Babylon, Susa and Ecbatana; Persepolis is not mentioned by our author at all (nor in pre-Alexandrian Greek literature in general). If we want an insight into the whole ensemble of the constructions and rooms of a residence, including the exact specification of the palace staff and the other people 'at court', the man from Cnidus is a less than ideal 'companion' or 'tour guide'.

¹¹ Winterling 2004: 79.

¹² Winterling 2004: 89–90.

¹³ Cf. Lenfant 2004: ix–xvi.

The 'inner' and the 'outer court'

Court research distinguishes an 'inner court' of people permanently in the ruler's personal vicinity from an 'outer court' with others whose presence is only temporary. Members of the 'inner court' are, of course, the king and the members of his household who are closest to him: his relatives as well as the domestic functionaries. Additionally, there are people who do not count as members of his 'household' in the strict sense, but who regard court service or a presence at court (and with it their special role in the ruler's vicinity) as so attractive that they voluntarily seek the service of the monarch. There are other people whom the king asks or summons to his court. With the help of the members of his household and the other people permanently present, the monarch is generally able to display the court's 'stateliness', in the sense that it clearly amounts to an institution in its own right, and acquires organisational complexity with court offices, favour hierarchies, and so forth. In the end, he may also make it a place of representation, embracing the whole range of forms of symbolic communication, such as art, architecture, ceremony and costume, which legitimise his authority.

Members of the 'outer court' are those whom the king appoints in the distant imperial service (for instance as provincial governors) and whom he supplies with land and income in the provinces. There are others whose interaction he seeks only at the 'outer court', and not in the centre of power (for example, potential rivals for the throne). In general, such figures appear at court only irregularly or the court visits them only on certain occasions.

If we now turn again to the Ctesianic oeuvre, we recognise that the author only allows us a very narrow view of the personnel at court. He knows the members of the royal family (the king – Ctesias never calls him 'Great King' or makes use of other indigenous oriental titles – the heir to the throne, the king's sons), and the women of the royal 'household' (the spouses, the princesses and the concubines) who play such an important role. He locates the latter into certain separate residences, and ascribes to them numerous affairs (cf. Amytis F13 §32; F14 §34.44) and – with respect to Amestris (F14 §39) and Parysatis (for example, F16 §61.66–67) – special cruelty and influence over power.¹⁴ He knows domestic servants of the royal household and at court, with – at least until the time of Darius II – eunuchs playing a special, mostly baleful role, thereby upsetting the usual

¹⁴ For the women of the Achaemenid royal family and court, see Brosius 1996; also Briant 2002: 277–86. For the women in Ctesias' work, cf. Auberger 1993; 1995; Lenfant 2004: CXV–CXVIII; CXX–CXXIII.

order of rank.¹⁵ He writes of Greek doctors who, like the author, hold a prominent place;¹⁶ he also mentions, at the end of his report, court offices (like that of the ‘chiliarch’ [*azabarites*]: F15 §49) and court titleholders (like the ‘table companions’ [*homotrapezoí*]: F14 §43), without, however, reconstructing the organisational complexity of the court (I shall turn to all that later on).¹⁷ Above all, the characteristic features, institutions and specialists of the political and administrative as well as the economic and fiscal activities of the court remain strangely superficial and colourless.¹⁸ We know from other sources that Persia knew formalised committees for the consultation of the king that consisted of court office holders and special confidants. Although our author is at least acquainted with the king’s ‘friends’ (*philoi*) and ‘relatives’ (*syngeneis*), Ctesias’ royal counsellors are mostly individuals who normally give detrimental instead of useful advice. Besides this, virtually no light is thrown on the economic provisioning of the court, and the personal attendance record of its lord.¹⁹

If (as is conventional) one considers the recruitment of the people closest to the ruler as an indicator of the stability of a monarchy, then there is again no real system: their choice seems partly arbitrary, allegiances are fragile, and the cohesion of the court society and the royal supervision of them are barely visible, even if the monarch generally makes the final decisions.

The ‘outer court’ is also addressed when Ctesias mentions the summoning of family members, of satraps (F13 §§ 11–12; F15 §50) or of the members of the families of high imperial officials, who – as it were – serve as ‘political hostages’ for the good conduct of their clan chiefs (F14 §42). But here too there is no systematic treatment of the problem.

Communication at court

A person’s position at court is dependent on royal favour or mercy.²⁰ The gift of the ruler, it symbolises the personal closeness to and the accessibility of the ruler, and thereby becomes a vehicle for information about the status of a single member of a court society. At court, there is a kind of favour hierarchy – partly because of the shortage of possibilities to interact with the monarch – as well as a competition among courtiers for the king’s favour.

¹⁵ For the eunuchs at court and the problems of Greek terminology, see Briant 2002: 268–77; Jursa 2011; Pirngruber 2011. – For Ctesias’ eunuchs, see Lenfant 2004: CXV–CXX.

¹⁶ Briant 2002: 264–6; Brosius 2011.

¹⁷ For the court offices and court officials, see Briant 2002: 258–64; 307–38; Keaveney 2010; Wiesehöfer 2010.

¹⁸ See Briant 2002: 422.

¹⁹ See Briant 2002: 286–97.

²⁰ Cf. Wiesehöfer 2010.

Because of that rivalry, there might develop a secondary favour hierarchy (of favourites of the ruler and people in the favourites' favour), and the rivalry might become more set in the form of factions at court. Courtly hierarchies are generally very unstable. Unexpected rises and sudden falls of individuals are absolutely characteristic for court societies. The competition for favour at court normally leads to opportunistic behaviour or to disingenuous communication, while flattery towards the ruler or intrigues and defamation of competitors are a daily occurrence.

These are the communication structures and patterns Ctesias mentions and describes in vivid detail as characteristics of the Persian court. Oaths and other forms of 'contract' (*dexiosis* etc.,²¹ F9 §8; F14 §34), gifts of the ruler and to the king (F13 §26), common meals (F27 §70) as well as individual careers, positions of trust and sudden falls are said to document the Achaemenid favour hierarchies (cf. the biography of Megabyzus, F14 §37–43, or of the eunuch Artoxares F14 §42–F15 §54). However, disingenuous communication seems to predominate clearly: eunuchs and women, and others too, scheme and intrigue so as to lead competitors astray.²² Nevertheless, as far as the main characters are concerned, there is no uniformly bad eunuch or woman. King Artaxerxes fakes history (i.e. the story of the death of his brother Cyrus);²³ he rules, rewards and punishes partly extremely arbitrarily but, at the same time, he is an extremely vulnerable person, like the kings before him (because of throne crises, revolts or disingenuous communication of people at court). In particular, Ctesias gives special attention to the sudden rise and fall of favourites (cf. for instance the biography of Megabyzus: F14 §37–43), and it is not by chance that we owe to him particularly impressive and colourful descriptions of the Persian punishments for disloyalty.²⁴ However, most of those sanctions seem to have sprung up from the author's fantasy. To sum up, I would say that Artaxerxes' Ctesianic court is not marked by internal order, steady rules and dependable communication structures; rather, the uncertainty of positions (including that of the king) and of hierarchies as well as – I quote Montesquieu's description of the French Early-Modern court – 'fear of truth, flattery, betrayal, falseness . . .'²⁵ of the people at court determine the scene.

²¹ Knippschild 2002; Jacobs and Rollinger 2005.

²² Ctesias presents a particularly vivid picture of the scheming and gruelling, but at the same time attractive women (and their somewhat naive victims).

²³ Lenfant 2004: cxl. ²⁴ Cf. Rollinger 2010.

²⁵ '... le désir de s'enrichir sans travail, l'aversion pour la vérité, la flatterie, la trahison, la perfidie . . . forment, je crois, le caractère du plus grand nombre des courtisans, marqué dans tous les lieux et dans tous les temps.' Truc 1961: 1.28.

The court as the political centre

Power is exercised not only by the monarch, but also by those in his vicinity, for instance while trying to influence the ruler, favouring other courtiers whose favour corresponds to their own, or procuring for them access to the king. Corruption and patronage are signs of those possibilities.²⁶ The monarch himself might have the problem controlling the structures of power and influence. Favourites can become rivals, or perhaps support potential rivals from the ruler's own family. This might result in the fall or even death of the favourite or the king himself. If the latter wants to prevent this from happening, he is forced to become especially distrustful of those who stand next to him and whom he would normally trust the most.

At the same time, however, one function of the court is the representation of kingship towards the aristocracy and the representatives of the neighbouring states. This representation is served by the court offices and the court ceremonial as well as the banquets and festivities, the exalted lifestyle and the material splendour of the residence and court.²⁷

As far as the Ctesianic description of the Achaemenid court is concerned, it becomes apparent that there is in fact very little information about royal power and representation. In fact, the king appears rather as a person who is easily influenced. Many exert that influence, or at least try to do so. Chief among them are the eunuchs,²⁸ whom Ctesias rightly characterises as 'chamberlains', not 'castrati'; secondly, the female members of the royal household and the court, who also serve in narrative terms to dramatise events and link together single episodes;²⁹ thirdly, the members of an 'inner circle' of royal confidants.³⁰ Lobbyism, patronage, corruption (cf. F30 §73 for Evagoras' gifts to Satibarzanes), shifting alliances and advancement

²⁶ Wiesehöfer 2010. ²⁷ Jacobs 2010; Kistler 2010; Henkelman 2010.

²⁸ In Ctesias, the special influence of the eunuchs – who survived only into the reign of Darius II – becomes apparent in the following areas: they transfer the corpses of late kings into Persia and guard the kings' tombs (cf., e.g., F13 §9; F35 §23); they are involved in the conspiracy of the Magi (however, they also announce it) (F13 §13, F13 §13.15); they are actively involved in the murder of rulers and successors to the throne (F13 §33; F15 §48), but also in the identification of a successor (F15 §50). The vita of Artaxerxes (F14 §42–F15 §54) symbolises particularly well not only the political possibilities of powerful eunuchs, but also the lability of their special position at court.

²⁹ Lenfant (2004: CXVI) rightly observed that women increasingly take over the eunuchs' position as influential members of the court after Artaxerxes' death. However, most women of the royal family and the court remain in the shadows of history; only a few of them, like Parysatis and Stateira in King Artaxerxes' time, enter into highly powerful positions, without however being able to exert decisive political power.

³⁰ At the beginning of each king's rule, Ctesias mentions the people who are the most powerful ones (*megiston de par' auto edynato* etc.: F13 §9.24.33; F15 §48.54).

and loss of social status at court are a regular occurrence. In that regard, Ctesias' description particularly brings into focus the (in the end totally fruitless) promotion of the king's brother Cyrus by the queen mother Parysatis and other courtiers (F16 §59), the revenge of the queen mother on the 'murderers' of her favourite son (F16 §66–67) and the conflict between Parysatis and the king's no less cruel (F16 §58) spouse Stateira (F27 §70), a conflict in which the king himself remains conspicuously passive.³¹ Moreover, some narrative elements of such scenes remind us of those of Greek novels and perhaps also of post-Euripidean tragedy. Nevertheless, hardly ever are the mechanisms of power and control of influence really apparent; instead, snatches of gossip and the view through the keyhole predominate.

The court as a place of social ranking

The 'inner court' is also a symbol of social order, a place where social ranking is put on display and different elite groups are integrated. This is true equally for the monarch, those closest to him and the relations between them. The everyday court ceremonial is a reflection of these positions and relations.

Ctesias describes this sort of rank manifestation only rudimentarily, for example, when mentioning bearers of special court titles ('table companion': *homotrapezos*), owners of special court offices ('chiliarch': *azabarites*) and close confidants of the ruler. But again one does not have the impression that social ranking at the Persian court distinguished itself by steadiness, reliability and internal order. Intimates of the king come and go, people rapidly reach the king's favour and lose it again just as quickly; everything seems arbitrary and protean. Ctesias is not very much concerned with the court ceremonial by which social ranking manifests itself in a particular way.

Ctesias and his *Persika*

Let us try to draw a conclusion that points at the same time towards the character and effect of the court sections of Ctesias' work, and his intentions when writing his *Persika*. As we can see, his description of the Achaemenid court is not systematic, and makes no attempt to record

³¹ Ctesias only talks about the king's anger (*orge*) (F27 §70); only Parysatis' eunuchs and Ginge, one of her intimates, get punished.

historical developments. There is an analogous image of the Persian court beyond those sections of the *Persika* for which Ctesias himself claims to have been an eyewitness. There are even quite evident overlaps in substance with his view of Assyrian palace life in Babylon from the era of stagnation onwards (i.e. the reigns of Ninyas and Sardanapallus). Ctesias' portrayal of the court is therefore not a detailed and historically differentiated reconstruction of the specifically Achaemenid form of the 'inner' and the 'outer court'. It may also raise serious doubts about the historical reliability of his description of Persian court life and his characterisation of Achaemenid kings, queens, functionaries and courtiers. Although almost all historians of Achaemenid history do agree on that, this statement, in my view, still needs re-emphasising. Not only has research traditionally relied heavily on Ctesias when seeking, for example, to write biographical sketches of Artaxerxes II and his mother Parysatis, but also popular textbooks still cling to that 'orientalistic' view of pre-Islamic Persian monarchy. As regards the character of the court, Ctesias' description is a mixture of (alleged?) experiences and imagination; the court appears as a place of regularly returning violent scenarios (conspiracies, revolts, intrigues, longings for revenge, cruel punishments), a place without stability and rules, the domain of an indeed authoritative, but rather double-minded and easily influenced monarch, a playground of scheming people and a 'dangerous place' for people of integrity.³² Dominique Lenfant is certainly right when she states that Ctesias does not follow a self-contained pattern of rise and decadence, but provides us with the image of an empire, a monarchy, a court that are marked by the regular return of certain identical detrimental scenarios.³³ However, this observation does not address the point that the Persian monarchy appears in itself as a weak, often threatened, political institution.

Let us return to Ctesias' presentation of the Achaemenid court. Our main concern should not be to reconstruct historical events or Achaemenid institutions. With Ctesias we can observe the same scholarly line of argumentation as with Herodotus: the blame for his historical faults and historical weaknesses are put on his sources and his informants.³⁴ However:

... with the attempt to do away with obvious embarrassing information at the expense of postulated but not stringently verifiable sources – rumours, court gossip, circulating traditions – one too easily yields to the temptation

³² Lenfant 2004: CXXXVI. ³³ Lenfant 2004: CXXXVI.

³⁴ Cf. Stronk 2010: 30: 'To blame Ctesias for the nature of his sources seems to be an inadequate way to deal with him.'

to build up a hypothetical construct (of Ctesias' sources) for the sake of the generic term 'historiography' and by way of a basic trust in Ctesias' claim to have been an eyewitness. This hypothesis becomes a non-dischargeable debt when it comes to providing evidence for it.³⁵

Instead of using Ctesias as a source for the reconstruction of the history of events or for the characterisation of Achaemenid institutions we should rather be interested in him as a highly influential source for Greek views of the Orient. Generally, we would love to know more about the cultural and political discourses current in Greece in the first half of the fourth century BCE and in which Persia played a prominent role.³⁶ They helped to mould the identities of many Greek contemporaries; but they were probably also part of a game of addresses and responses, and they were probably much more diverse than the surviving fragments would have us believe.³⁷ Recent research on the imagery of that specific period could show that attitudes towards Persia must have been much more diverse than formerly thought, with variations depending on questions of genre, context, the convictions of individual artists and commissioners, and political circumstances.³⁸

Since Ctesias – in spite of some historically correct observations – can scarcely serve as a source for the reconstruction of Achaemenid court life, we have to deliberate again on two of our introductory questions: to which genre does the *Persika* belong, and what intention could the author have had with the publication of his work? Is he rightly to be called an historian? Or was Felix Jacoby – who taught Greek and Latin at my own university from 1905 until his forced retirement in 1935 – right when he called him 'one of the fathers of the historical romance'?³⁹ It goes without saying that Ctesias is not to be measured against modern theory-governed historiography. But already in antiquity there was argument as to the correct definition of a historian and a poet, and the assigning of Ctesias' work to a particular

³⁵ Bichler 2011: 22: 'Denn mit dem Versuch, sinnfällige Peinlichkeiten zu Lasten postulierter, aber nicht stringent nachweisbarer mündlicher Quellen – Gerüchte, Hofklatsch, kursierende Traditionen – aus der Welt zu schaffen, erliegt man in meinen Augen allzu leicht der Versuchung, um des Gattungsbegriffs der Historiographie willen und aus einem Grundvertrauen in Ktesias' Wort als Augen- und Ohrenzeuge heraus ein riesiges Hypothesengebäude (über Ktesias' Quellen) zu errichten, das zur uneinlösbaren Hypothek wird, wenn es gilt, dafür Beweise zu liefern.'

³⁶ But see now Madreiter 2012. Cf. Stevenson 1997; Binder 2008; Lenfant 2009; Lenfant 2011.

³⁷ I doubt whether one is allowed to speak of 'Classical Greek self-identity' or 'national identity against the ever-changing yet ever-present external Persian threat' (Llewellyn-Jones 2010: 55) in the light of the political and ideological heterogeneity of Greece (and sometimes even of individual *polis* communities).

³⁸ Hölscher 2000.

³⁹ Jacoby 1922: 2064; for the following, cf. the extensive treatment of the topic in Stronk 2010: 36–54 and Madreiter 2012: 118–25.

genre was felt to be problematic. Compare, for example, Photius' comment on the pleasure of reading Ctesias with Dionysius of Halicarnassus' view of both Ctesias and Herodotus in his work *On literary composition* (*De compositione verborum*); and the two of them with Demetrius' so-called 'Scythian discourse' in his work *On style* (*De elocutione*) in which he praises Ctesias for the expressiveness/vividness (*enargeia*) displayed in his work:

This *syngrapheus* ('prose-writer'/'historian'/'composer'?) [sc. Ctesias] is both very clear and simple. For this reason his writing is enjoyable... And he does not take his narrative off into inappropriate digressions like Herodotus. (Photius 72 p. 45a5ff. (T13 Lenfant), trans. J. Robson)

The work of both the *syngrapheus* from Cnidus, Ctesias, and the Socratic Xenophon contains a style (*lexis*) that is as pleasurable as possible, but it is nevertheless not composed as beautifully as it could be. I am talking generally, and not absolutely, since in the work of the former writers [sc. Thucydides and Antiphon] the arrangement of passages can be pleasurable and in the work of the latter it can be beautiful. Herodotus' composition (*synthesis*), however, displays both these qualities: it is both pleasurable and beautiful. (Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *On literary composition* 10.4f. (T12 Lenfant))

In short this poet (*poietes*) – for it would be reasonable to call him a poet – is a master of vividness throughout his work. (Demetrius, *On style* §215 (T14a Lenfant))

Modern scholars have also argued about the correct characterisation of Ctesias' work for decades. In recent history, some have considered that the *Persika* is a kind of 'fictional historiography' (*fiktionale Geschichtsschreibung*)⁴⁰, others that it represents 'history that places emphasis on exemplary fiction' (*auf modellhafte Fiktion setzende Historie*).⁴¹ A third group of scholars would like to suggest the term 'faction' for a mixture of facts and fiction with didactic and entertaining purposes.⁴² The question was also an important issue at the 2006 Salza conference.⁴³ And the editors of the last text editions and translations respectively still have the same difficulties of classification:

Ctesias is deliberately blending historical fact and novella-style storytelling in order to create a rich, fluid, and gripping historical drama... We can now regard the work as one in which historiography... is blurred into a kind of creative dramatic history or historical novella... During his years in Persia

⁴⁰ Bleckmann 2006: *passim*.

⁴¹ Bichler 2007b: 476. Cf. Holzberg 1996: 629: 'author of a novel-like historical text'.

⁴² Cf. Stronk 2007: 44–55. ⁴³ Cf. Wiesehofer, Rollinger and Lanfranchi 2011.

he observed, asked questions, listened, recorded, and transmitted the rich mixture of authentic Persian stories of kings and dynasties in this unique melange of history, gossip, fantasy, and (tragic) poetry.⁴⁴

... we should therefore ... constantly bear in mind that we are not facing a historical work *stricto sensu*, but the didactical work of a 'poet', treating historical persons and events in a, perhaps, more or less invented historical context (of which, of course, many or even most parts may be quite accurate). We even might, perhaps, consider him as a kind of Tragic Historian,⁴⁵ a kind of forerunner to that style, a mixture between novel-like literature and 'genuine' historiography.⁴⁶

Although both quotations testify to the shift in scholarly debate from the 'historian' Ctesias to the 'writer/poet', they nevertheless – in my view unconvincingly – try to save his *Persika* as a piece of historiography.

In her recently published thesis, Irene Madreiter takes over from literary theory (L. Hutcheon) the term 'historiographic metafiction' to characterise the *Persika*. In her view, Ctesias, by his narrative art, might have been capable of captivating generations of readers, and at the same time using the opportunity to play to the gallery by ascribing to himself the prominent role of a doctor and diplomat of the Persian Great King consulting the *basilikai diphtherai*.⁴⁷

Even if I am much more sceptical than many of the other scholars about Ctesias' life at the Persian court and about the 'historian' Ctesias, I fully agree that the author's affiliation to a specific literary genre, not least to classifications of a modern kind, is a problematic issue. In that sense Ctesias' work is really 'indefinable',⁴⁸ or at least it contains a mixture of different

⁴⁴ Llewellyn-Jones 2010: 76, 78, 86. ⁴⁵ Cf. already Marasco 1988: 88.

⁴⁶ Stronk 2010: 42; cf. Stronk 2007, 2011. See also Marincola 1997: 22: an 'historical narrative [which] contained much palace intrigue and seems to have frequently shaded into romance'; Whitmarsh 2008: 2: a 'romanticised Persian history'.

⁴⁷ 'Die *Persika* daher (wenigstens in Teilen) als historiographische Metafiktion zu verstehen, gibt dem Werk jenen Wert zurück, den man ihm nimmt, will man es als Historiographie *strictu [sic] sensu* lesen. Die *res factae* werden insofern rehabilitiert, als das Fremde erst existieren muss, damit man es verarbeiten kann, wir also keine reinen Konstruktionen oder Fiktionen vor uns haben. Ktesias' *Persika* stellen eine begriffliche Erfassung des historisch Wahrscheinlichen dar, in denen fingierte Quellenangaben (*basilikai diphtherai*) und konstruierte Biographien Bestandteil seiner Darstellung sinnvoller Abfolgen des Geschehens sind.' (2012: 124f.). I am not quite sure if the term historiographic metafiction – which is pointing at a quintessentially post-modern art form with inherent reflections on the qualities of history, examples of anachronism to break illusions or insecure narrative situations as important stylistic devices, and where historical figures are highly fictionalised, and pastiche and parody are central ways of presenting character portraits – is really the right term to be used in this respect. However, I must confess that Madreiter's way of reconciling *res factae* and *res fictae* to me seems quite convincing.

⁴⁸ Stronk 2010: 47.

genres.⁴⁹ That Ctesias, like Xenophon in his *Cyropaedia*,⁵⁰ deliberately and probably also extensively used the novella form has recently rightly been underlined by Lloyd Llewellyn-Jones; however, the same author has also made clear ‘that it is impossible to know if the novellas . . . were broken up into several episodes – as in Xenophon – or recounted as one complete tale’.⁵¹ The problem whether we should call the use of the novella-format the beginning of the history of the novel or not depends on the definition of ‘novel’.

In the end, we have to ask ourselves what goal Ctesias may have set out to achieve with his *Persika*. Again, Irene Madreiter is, in my view, able to show quite nicely how Ctesias played with the expectations of his audience by asking them to measure the intentions and deeds of his multifaceted oriental characters against the respective Greek norms. Presumably, his audience or readers might have been highly irritated if those characters acted contrary to their expectations, and those irritations might be detected, for instance, in many of Plutarch’s comments on Ctesias’ remarks. Madreiter also claims that – apart from Ctesias’ playing with his literary models, not least Herodotus and Hellanicus,⁵² and from the historiographically well-known claims of authentication (autopsy, interrogation of witnesses and study of files) – the author might primarily have been concerned with clarifying his own views of an ideal rule and of the possible dangers of Greek *poleis*’ aspirations for hegemony; one may add, particularly in a time of intensive Greek reflection on the ideal state and the recurring breakdown of negotiations on a long-term *koine eirene*. Thereby, the Achaemenid Empire would serve as the deterrent example of an absolute monarchy in which the injurious influence of wealth and the informal power of women and eunuchs become apparent. However, in doing so, Ctesias seems to play with different modes of moral behaviour and human action and to avoid black-and-white images. He resorts to means of ironic dissociation just as to those of an entertaining kind. Madreiter also assumes a patriotic Cnidian anti-Persian trait of the work.⁵³

⁴⁹ Bichler (2011: 24) rightfully comments on the genre debate: ‘So steht ein Unstern über dem Bemühen, einen Autor als Historiographen zu würdigen, dessen Werk so sichtbar den Anforderungen an dieses Genre nicht genügen will, auch wenn sein literarischer Reiz kaum zu bestreiten ist.’ See also Madreiter 2012: 120.

⁵⁰ *Cyr.* 5.1.1–30; 6.1.30–55, 4.1–20; 7.3.3–17 (the Panthea novella); cf. Gera 1993: 209.

⁵¹ Llewellyn-Jones 2010: 68–76.

⁵² Cf. Bichler 2004; Stronk 2010: 34 who wants to make Aeschylus, Euripides and others part of the game.

⁵³ Madreiter 2012: 125–33.

On the other hand, Ctesias' on the whole rather stereotyped perspective on the Achaemenid court, although probably actually meant as a warning to his Greek contemporaries, appears rather to have served the prejudices and needs of an ancient as well as a post-ancient readership, who could shape their own identity by distancing themselves from the foreign and the unfamiliar other. Thus Ctesias has helped to lay the foundation of the caricature of an 'oriental despotism', to colour that image and to implant it into the heads of Greeks and Romans and their post-ancient admirers.

*Iskander and the idea of Iran**Daniel L. Selden*

Discernment (*wizdārīh*) is this: to separate (*wizīdan*) one's thought, speech, and action from the power (*nērōg*) of foreigners, for the benefit of one's own people (*xwešān*).
 – *Dēnkard* 6.267

In 1962, P. A. Brunt – later Camden Chair of Ancient History at Oxford – published a paper entitled “Persian Accounts of Alexander’s Campaigns,” in which he managed to cite *none* of the extant Īrānian narratives of the Makedonian invasion.¹ Although Brunt acknowledged “the important truth, that the Alexander historians did derive information from those who had fought on the Persian side,”² he argued that these were casual communications – the sorts of confidences, for example, that the Makedonians might get out of captured scouts or high-placed Persians gone over to Alexander’s cause. Brunt’s principal target in the piece, however, was the conjecture that Greeks or Persians from Dārayavahuš’s camp composed discursive accounts of the expedition, a prospect – though pursued by W. W. Tarn³ – that he found “totally without foundation.”⁴ With Brunt, then, a door closes behind us: assessment of Alexander henceforth proceeds mainly through the sifting of Greco-Roman sources⁵ – Ptolemaius, Cleitarchus, Aristobolus, Dínōn’s *Persica*, M. Junianus Justinus’ *Epitome*, and so forth⁶ – while Īrānian compositions stand quietly locked out of the Western historian’s monument to Alexander’s glorious and epoch-making expedition.⁷

To give Brunt his due, however, had he consulted the Īrānian literature⁸ – traceable as far back as the Parthian period, consolidated under Sāsānid

¹ Brunt 1962. For details of editions of the Pahlavī sources, see the index following this chapter.

² Brunt 1962: 153. ³ Tarn 1948. ⁴ Brunt 1962: 153.

⁵ For a normative account, see Badian 1985. More methodologically advanced is Heckel and Tittle 2009, which nonetheless still finds no place for Īrānian accounts.

⁶ For the early, fragmentary sources, see Auberger 2001; Hammond 1993. For an overview of all ancient sources typically used by contemporary Alexander historians in the West, see Wiemer 2005: 16–46.

⁷ Cf. Said 1979; Bernal 1987–2006. On the problem of Alexander’s “greatness,” see Wiemer 2005: 9–15.

⁸ See Briant 2003: 443–512.

authority and canonized through Abu 'l-Qāsim Ferdowsī *Šāhnāme*,⁹ among other works¹⁰ – he would have encountered reports of Alexander whose discursive organization differs so radically from the works of Diodorus Siculus, Arrian, Quintus Curtius Rufus and Plutarch as to render them largely incomprehensible to those for whom the Hellenic historiographical tradition constitutes the norm.¹¹ This is not because the narratives are particularly oblique: it comes as no surprise, for instance, that Pahlavī texts should offer a harsher appraisal than do Greek accounts of the assailant who conquered Achaemenid Īrān.¹² So the *Ardā Wirāz Nāmag* speaks of ‘that evil, wretched, heretic, sinful (*druwand*), maleficent Alexander . . . [who] killed the ruler of Īrān (*Ērān dahibed*) and destroyed and ruined the palace (*dar*) and the sovereignty (*xwadāyih*)’.¹³ Beyond calumny, however, what underpins this passage is the larger connection that Īrānian thought makes between orthodoxy and sovereignty,¹⁴ which renders Alexander a heretic (*ahlomōy*) – specifically a follower of the Lie (*druwand* < *drūj*, “lie”)¹⁵ – for having killed the king of *Ērān*, and destroyed the royal palace.¹⁶ Superficially a paratactic notice of Alexander’s deeds, the passage ultimately coheres as a series of metonyms for his place within the cosmic struggle between Ohrmazd and Ahreman which it was the burden of the Good Religion (*weh-dēn*) – that is, Mazdāism – to expound.¹⁷ As such, classical Īrānian accounts of Alexander not only stand embedded in a literary, political, and religious culture that looked for its authority to the Avesta,¹⁸ they shouldered the burden of appropriating the Makedonian conqueror for the creative mythmaking that has always served progressively to consolidate the identity of Īrān.¹⁹

I

“Why,” Bōxt-Mārē, a Christian of the ninth century CE, inquired of Ādurfarrobay ī Farroxzādān, “did God proclaim the [Mazdean] religion

⁹ See Cereti 2001; Macuch 2009.

¹⁰ See also the relevant passages in the historians al-'abarī, al-Tha'libī, etc.

¹¹ On the protocols of Pahlavī composition, see Menasce 1958. Wiemer 2005: 16 notes the literary form of the major Greek and Latin sources; see further, Minissale 1983, and Bosworth 1983. More generally, see White 1975 and 1986. See also Kramer and Maza 2002.

¹² Cf. Grainger 2007. ¹³ Vahman 1986: 77/191.

¹⁴ See Soudavar 2003; Panaino 2007. ¹⁵ For *druwandih*, see *Dēnkard* 3.106.

¹⁶ See Root 1979 and 2007; Dandamaev and Lukonin 1989: 238–336; Allen 2005: 86–109.

¹⁷ See Duchesne-Guillemin 1953. Solid introductions to Mazdāism include: Zaehner 1961; Boyce 1979; Nigosian 1993; Clark 1998; Varenne 2006; Stausberg 2008. Cf. *Dēnkard* 3.120: “It is the Mazdayasnian *dēn* that engenders all knowledge.”

¹⁸ Cf. *Dēnkard* 5.22.6. The best introduction to the Avesta is Hintze 2009.

¹⁹ See Bausani 1971; Gnoli 1989; Axworthy 2008.

in a language veiled and unknown?” “The Avesta,” the *dastwar* informed him, “constitutes the totality of knowledge . . . and by comparison with other languages so miraculous that it stands completely beyond the comprehension of mankind.”²⁰ In fact, few bodies of poetry have given rise to so thickly imbricated a tradition of commentary (Phl. *zand*) as the Old Avestan *Gāthās*.²¹ Of uncertain date and – within the distribution of Old Iranian dialects²² – of indeterminate linguistic filiation, the *Gāthās* stand alone.²³ Jean Kellens sets forth the case as follows:

The *Avesta* is a monument situated outside time and space upon which no historical or archeological document can be brought to bear. Not only are there no allusions to historical events or geographical places, not even mythical ones: . . . [comparative methods are] useless for analyzing content, since the *Gāthās* are the expression of a radical change in religious ideas that looks like a revolution with respect to Indo-Iranian religion, whose most faithful image is considered to be the *Rigveda*.²⁴

Grammatical parallels with Old Indic and Pahlavī glosses have done much to clarify the accidentence and syntax of Old Avestan;²⁵ yet large portions of the *Gāthic* lexicon – even Vedic cognates – remain semantically opaque.²⁶ So Kellens stresses: “[Scholarly] consensus over [the *Gāthās*]’ surface meaning [is] in fact nothing but a conventional agreement of the last resort.”²⁷ The Himalayan peaks of *Gāthic* poetry, moreover, which shows a remarkable capacity to personify new entities – *Ahura Mazdā* or the *Aməša Spəntas*, for example²⁸ – prove so forbidding that the great Iranianist Kaj Barr instructively conceded: “the more I read the *Gāthās*, the less I understand them.”²⁹

In their sublime isolation, then, the *Gāthās* require the critic to proceed with all the austerity of Porphyry’s directive: *Avestam exponere ex Avestā*.³⁰ Accordingly Kellens insists, “The study of the [*Gāthās*] has everything to gain by ridding itself of the image of a founder or prophet”:³¹ with respect

²⁰ *Dēnkard* 5.23. The text dates from the ninth century CE; the passage could be earlier.

²¹ Menasce 1973: 5–6. ²² See Schmitt 2000. ²³ Insler 1975: 1–2.

²⁴ Kellens 1987: 239–40; condensed. The position is not uncontroversial.

²⁵ Cf. Hoffmann 1975–1993. For the history of the discipline, see Kellens 2006. Even linguistically, however, Kellens cautions (1994a: 12): ‘La philologie du Veda et de l’Avesta est une science nue, à laquelle fait défaut l’assistance des disciplines annexes, sauf à ériger la légende en histoire ou à pratiquer sans précaution l’extrapolation à partir des résultats obtenus pour des époques plus récentes.’

²⁶ Nigolian 1993: 35; Stausberg 2008: 15–17. ²⁷ Kellens 2000: 43. ²⁸ Narten 1982.

²⁹ Quoted in Duchesne-Guillemin 1948: 13–14. ³⁰ See Pfeiffer 1968: 225–7.

³¹ Kellens 1991: 85. See further Kellens 2006. For the biographical tradition, see Molé 1993. On the orthodox position of such apostasy, see *Nērangestān* 23.9.

to the author function and the fallacies that this inevitably entails,³² the *Gāthās*, Kellens urges, “are a text like any other text.”³³ *Yasna* 30 – the *Aṭ. tā. vaxšiiā Hāiti* – to which later Mazdean tradition has recurrently returned as the authoritative statement of the *Gāthic* vocation,³⁴ constitutes an indispensable point of departure from which to unfold the order of Avestan composition.³⁵ The poem has seven strophes, the third of which turns on an asyndetic collocation that sets the “better” over and against “bad”: *vahiiō akəm*. The tension between what the text calls these “renowned twins” (*yā yəmā asruuātem*),³⁶ and the various ways of understanding their reciprocal relations, in turn becomes the project of the *hāiti* as a whole.³⁷ So the remainder of the line provides a preliminary gloss – a contextualization – that situates the oxymoron with respect to three independent faculties:³⁸

manahicā vacahicā # šiaaθanōi hī vahiiō akəmā

in thought and in word, in act they are two: better and bad.³⁹

Because the pairing here is asymmetric – “better,” the comparative, takes its value over and against the positive degree of the adjective “bad,” itself conjoined by the enclitic *-cā* as if it were an afterthought⁴⁰ – the figure is unstable and evokes further specification: are *vahyah-* and *aka-* mutually reinforcing as two aspects of the same agent, or do they constitute an uneven-handed opposition? The passage that embeds the line expounds the figure antithetically, first by construing *vahyah-* and *aka-* as synecdoches, attributes of what the poem then further personifies as primal forces. Projecting tense into temporality, the *hāiti* then proceeds to narrativise the figural complex in its entirety.⁴¹

Hear with your ears the best things. Reflect with clear purpose, each man for himself, on the two choices for decision, being alert indeed to declare yourselves for Him before the great Requit. Truly there are two primal Spirits (*mainiiū pauraē*), twins renowned to be in conflict. In thought and word, in act they are two: better and bad (*vahiiō akəmā*). And those

³² Foucault 1969. ³³ Kellens 2000: 29 and 47. Cf. Barthes 1968.

³⁴ For example, Zaehner 1955; Boyce 1975–1991, 1: 192–246.

³⁵ For an overview, see Insler 1975: 159–61. Detailed explication: Kellens and Pirart 1997.

³⁶ Cf. Insler 1975: 165.

³⁷ For a summary inventory of figures of speech in the *Gāthās*, see Humbach 1991, 1: 94–112.

³⁸ Text: Kellens and Pirart 1988–91: vol. 1. Translation: Boyce 1984a: 35; modified.

³⁹ There are a number of different renderings of these lines; see in particular Kellens and Pirart 1988–91: 1:10 and 3:45–53. Avestan *-cā* is cognate with Greek τε, Latin *-que*.

⁴⁰ Bartholomae 1904: 563–75.

⁴¹ Cf. Todorov 1971: 32–41. For a full account of Mazdean temporality, see Zaehner 1955.

who act well (*budāṇhō*) have chosen rightly between these two, not so the evildoers (*duždāṇhō*). And when these two Spirits first came together (*jasāētem paouruuīm*) they created life and death (*gaēmčā ajiiaitīmčā*), and how at the end Worst Existence shall be for the wicked, but Best Purpose for the good man. Of these two Spirits, the Wicked One (*drəguuā*) chose achieving the worst things. The Most Holy Spirit, who is clad in hardest stone, chose right, and [so do those] who shall satisfy Ahura Mazdā continually with rightful acts. The *daēvas* indeed did not choose rightly between these two, for the Deceiver (*dābaomā*) approached them as they conferred. Because they chose the worst purpose, they then rushed to Fury (*aēšəmət*), with whom they have afflicted (*bənauiəm*) the world and mankind (*ahūm*). [Y. 30.2–6]⁴²

Explicitly self-referential, the narrative here leads the reader to hypostasize the modifiers *vahyah-* and *aka-*, a move which in turn facilitates the speech acts that exhort the audience to “Hear!” (*srauv-*) and “Choose!” (*var-*).⁴³ Hence the caesura that separates *manahicā vacahicā* (“thought and word”), on the one hand, from *šiiəoθanōi* (“act”), on the other – a pause that implicitly broaches the question of whether constative and performative language converge here or divide,⁴⁴ a problem that, Kellens has shown, it becomes the function of the Mazdayasnian liturgy to resolve.⁴⁵ One of the entailments of all speech acts, moreover, is – as John Searle has shown – the assignment of intention,⁴⁶ whence the prosopopoeia of the irrepressible orator whom an earlier chapter of the first *Gāthā* calls *Zaraθuštra*.⁴⁷ As the vertiginous figuration here suggests, however, the assumption of the prophet who “expresses himself . . . in religious exaltation”⁴⁸ is not only prescientific:⁴⁹ “to speak of an author [of the *Gāthās*],” Kellens rightly insists, “is frankly absurd.”⁵⁰

Out of the antithesis, then, on which the *Aṭ.tā.vaxšiiā Hāiti* turns, the narrative expounds a cosmogonic drama that unfolds in three acts: past, present and future. In the beginning (*paoiriia*), there were two opposing Spirits (*mainiiū*), one of which chose the best (*vahištā*), the other the worst (*acištā*). The first the passage calls “Ahura Mazdā” while the second Spirit it

⁴² The translation follows Boyce 1984a: 35 with many revisions. For alternative constructions, see Kellens and Pirart 1988/91, Humbach 1991, and Skjærvø 2005.

⁴³ Cf. Austin 1978. ⁴⁴ For the problem, see de Man 1979: 119–35 and 278–302.

⁴⁵ See Kellens 1994b. ⁴⁶ Searle 1970; cf. Wimsatt and Beardsley 1954.

⁴⁷ Cf. Selden 2007. Y. 28.0: “Entreating is the thought, entreating the word, entreating the action of truthful (*ašaonō*) Zaraθuštra. May the Bounteous Immortals (*aməša spəntā*) accept [his] *Gāthās*”; Y. 29.8: “Here I have found Zaraθuštra Spitāma, the only one who listened to our teachings. He wishes, O Mazdā and Truth, to sing praises”; etc.

⁴⁸ Varenne 2006: 134. For a late Mazdean view of intention (*mēnišn*), see *Dēnkard* 3.67.

⁴⁹ It is also an anachronism, see Selden 2006.

⁵⁰ Kellens 1994a: 12; *pace* Henning 1951. On “authorship” in the period, see Wyrick 2004.

refrains from naming altogether, characterizing it synecdochically instead as the “Evil One” (*drəguuā*). Of these two primal forces, Ahura remarks elsewhere: “Neither our thoughts (*menā*), nor our explanations, nor our intellects (*xratauuō*), nor our choices, nor our words, nor our actions, nor our religions (*daēnā*), nor our souls (*uruuqno*), agree.”⁵¹ Inevitably, therefore, these primordial “twins” came into confrontation: “The Evil One did everything to harm Ahura Mazdā,”⁵² and this engagement realizes itself as universal history, which henceforth unfolds as a series of subsidiary oppositions:⁵³ first creation⁵⁴ – conceptualized as life over against non-life: the creatures whom the Evil One managed to deceive (*daēvas*) assumed as their perennial project to plague the whole of existence (*ahūm*), thereby forever pitting evildoers (*duzdānhō*) over against “those who act well” (*budānhō*). In this way, the original antithesis becomes a matter of deliberation: thus, on a second plane, the cosmic conflict faces every individual as a choice (*varana*-) in the present. The necessity for each person to discriminate in life between Ahura Mazdā (“the better”) and the Wicked One (“the bad”) is ongoing and eternal.⁵⁵ Thus the *Gāthā* speaks of “the two alternatives (*qsaīiā*) by which *we are going to live*.” The poem accordingly presents itself as primarily performative, as an intervention in the here and now, exhorting members of the Mazdean community to make the right decision – not the choice of the *daēvas*, but the choice for the Best Purpose (*vahištem manō*). The project is not only individual but, also collective: “How can *we* drive deceit (*drujem*) out of ourselves,” asks the *Taθβā.pərəsā Hāiti*, “and onto those who stuffed with *disobedience* (*asruštōis*), do not strive for the benevolence of order (*vañəuš manənhō*)?”⁵⁶ The ethical character of this deliberation sets the stage, then, for a third and final plane of reckoning, an apocalyptic moment in the future when “the better” will be set apart definitively from “the bad,” and the Truthful One (*ašauuā*) will consign reward or punishment to the living and the dead, each according to the choice that he has made in life between the two contrary forces:⁵⁷

When the moment of Retribution (*kaēnā*) for the [*daēvas*] has come, then, O Mazdā, shall power (*xšaθrem*) be present for you along with good thought (*vohū manənhā*) so that you may explain what shall be done with those who deliver the Lie (*drujem*) over into the hands of the Truth (*ašai*) . . . Then indeed will the prosperity of the wicked be destroyed, and the followers of truth will share in the promised reward and dwell with the Good Mind,

⁵¹ Y. 45.2. ⁵² *Dēnkard* 6.12. For further details, see *Wizīdagihā ī Zadspram* 1.

⁵³ See the *Greater Bundahishn* 5.1–2; *Dēnkard* 3.74; etc. ⁵⁴ Cf. *Dēnkard* 5.24.1.

⁵⁵ Cf. *Dēnkard* 5.7.4. ⁵⁶ Insler 1975: 70. ⁵⁷ See Boyce 1984b.

Truth, and Wisdom . . . Thereafter eternal bliss shall everywhere prevail. [Y. 30.8–11].⁵⁸

Just as the cosmic drama commenced with the antagonism between the two Primal Spirits, so the conflict ends with the triumph of Ahura Mazdā over his wicked twin. This, then, ushers in an era of harmony and order (*aša-*), that returns the world to the non-conflictual balance which had preceded the Evil One's cosmogonic assault, thereby enclosing the violence of history within the parenthesis of pacific composure.

Recent accounts of the *Gāthās'* rhetorical composition have stressed the importance of ring composition as an organizing principle for the corpus as a whole.⁵⁹ So Almut Hintze notes: "Detailed studies on the composition of individual Gathic hymns indicate that they possess a symmetrical structure . . . All [Gathic hymns] share the characteristic pattern of radial concentricity in which the stanzas are arranged symmetrically with respect to those at the center of the hymn. The midmost stanzas again correlate with the first and last ones, and frequently condense a major theme of the poem."⁶⁰ Thus, in the *Aṭ.tā.vaxšiiā Hāiti*, the opening and closing strophes of the hymn accentuate phrases which are reciprocally inverse. These concomitantly enclose a thematically opposing expression, which occupies a privileged position in the central stanza of the hymn:

A	B	C	B	A
<u>yāmazdāthā</u>	<u>hiiat</u>	– <i>daēuuācinā</i> <i>hiiat</i>	– <u>hiiat</u>	<u>ya mazdā dadāt</u>

St. 1		St. 6		St. 11
<i>mazdā</i>	→	<i>daēuuā</i>	→	<i>mazdā</i>

The chiasmus here not only projects the antithesis *vahiio akəm* onto the concentric structure of the poem: it makes it possible to read the figure transitively as a mimesis of the cosmology that the *hāiti* narrates in greater detail – the harmonious order (*aša-*) of Ahura Mazdā, the disruption of the *daēvas* and the eventual reinstatement of the harmonious order (*aša-*)

⁵⁸ The translation follows Duchesne-Guillemin 1948: 235–42; reprinted in Varenne 2006. For alternative constructions, see Kellens and Pirart 1988–91, and Humbach 1991.

⁵⁹ See Schmidt 1968; 1974; and Schwartz 1986a; 1991; 1998; 2006.

⁶⁰ Hintze 2009: 17: 5–6; citing Schwartz 1998: 133.

of Ahura Mazdā in the end. “[C]hiasm,” writes Rodolphe Gasché, “is a form through which differences are installed, preserved, and overcome in one grounding figure of unity.”⁶¹ As such, it becomes impossible to say whether the form of the *Aṭ.tā.vaxšiiā Hāiti* gives rise to its content, or whether the content dictates its form. To decide the issue would require appeal to an author⁶² – Spitāma Zarduštra or an anonymous poet-minstrel (Prth. *gōsān*)⁶³ – which is precisely what the figuration makes it impossible to claim.

If, as Stanley Insler puts it, the *Aṭ.tā.vaxšiiā Hāiti* is a “hymn of instruction in the fundamental teachings of the prophet,”⁶⁴ then it constitutes, among other things, a primer in *Gāthic* figuration. Accordingly, we find that this *hāiti* constitutes one of the principal subtexts⁶⁵ not only for the poetry of the Young Avesta, but also for Pahlavī literature of the Sāsānian and early Islāmic periods, culminating in Ferdowsī’s *Šāhnāmeḥ*.⁶⁶ The *Vīdēvdād*, in particular – one of the tractates central to the Young Avesta – creatively refigures the antagonism between the two Spirits in its realization over time as a recurrent contest over space. *Gāthic* cosmology thus gives rise to Younger Avestan cosmography:

Ahura Mazdā said to Spitāma Zarduštra: ‘I have made, O Spitāma Zarduštra, a place obeying laws and not lacking happiness . . .

As the best of places and settlements, I first fashioned forth, I, Ahura Mazdā, the Aryan Expanse (*airiianem vaējō*) of the Good Lawful [River]. Then the Evil One (*aṅgrō mainiius*), full of destruction, counter-created the serpent in the river, and winter, a work of the *dāēvas* . . .

As the best of places and settlements, I second fashioned forth, I, Ahura Mazdā, Gāwa, which the Sughdhas inhabit. Then Aṅgra Mainyu, full of destruction, counter-created the locust, which brings death to cattle and plants.

As the best of places and settlements, I third fashioned forth, I, Ahura Mazdā, strong holy Mōuru. Then Aṅgra Mainyu, full of destruction, counter-created plunder and sin.⁶⁷

Sixteen times Ahura Mazdā creates righteous and contented regions – all of them geographically vague – and sixteen times Aṅgra Mainyu counters with a blight upon the land: sorcerers and dragons, natural disasters and

⁶¹ Gasché 1987: xviii. ⁶² The most influential example is Henning 1951.

⁶³ For the latter, see Boyce 1957. ⁶⁴ Insler 1975: 159.

⁶⁵ In Thomas Greene’s sense of the term: Greene 1982.

⁶⁶ For a survey of Pahlavī, see Cereti 2001; further summary in Boyce 1986 and Macuch 2009.

⁶⁷ *Vīdēvdād* 1.2–4. Translation: Skjærvø 2005. For the final phrase, see Anklesaria 1949: 5.

vexatious insects, menstruation, cannibalism, and pederasty – in all, the *Vīdēvdād* reckons, 99,999 diseases. These Ahura Mazdā will ultimately redress, at some moment in the future – so *Fargard* 22: “I shall drive away the evil eye, rottenness, and infection which Angra Mainyu has created against the bodies of mortals . . . I shall expel all manner of disease and destruction.”⁶⁸ The closely related *Zamyād Yašt* likewise assures us: “Imperishable will be the world (*gaēθā*) that is of truth, from generation to generation. Falsehood shall be done away with, returned to the place whence it has come to destroy the truthful one. The villainess will be terrified, and the lawless disappear.”⁶⁹

Overall, then, the *Vīdēvdād* deploys the same basic figural constructions that ordered the *Aṭ.tā.vaxšiiā Hāiti*. In form, the narrative remains concentric – the original creation of a place “obeying laws” mirrors the purified state to which, the *Vīdēvdād* predicts, the world will return. In between, however, Angra Mainyu, “rushes against the entire creation” in a series of antithetical assaults (*ēbgatīh*) that effectively unfold the *Gāthic* antithesis *vahiio akəm*. In the more expansive tally provided by the *Greater Bundahišn*, Angra Mainyu pits winter against summer, darkness against light, filth against cleanliness, stench against fragrance, war against peace – all the devastations that discomfit creatures in the world.⁷⁰ In one important respect, however, the cosmography of the *Vīdēvdād* exceeds the framework of the *Aṭ.tā.vaxšiiā Hāiti*. According to the *Vīdēvdād*, earthly creation commences with “the realm of the Aryans” (*airiianem vaējō*), against which domain Angra Mainyu unleashes non-Aryan tyrants to rule over the Aryans’ expanse (*anairiiaica daiṇhuš.aiwištāra*)⁷¹ – in effect *daēvas* who malevolently attempt to destroy “the best of places.”⁷² Thus, already for the *Vīdēvdād*, the antithesis *airiia-/anairiia-* constitutes one of the world’s fundamental oppositions where, in the logic of the asymmetrical antinomy, *Airyanem Vaējō* is better, while non-Aryans are evil – an opposition that is *a priori* thetic, in advance of any attempt to identify the categories with particular peoples. By reframing the opposition in terms of territory and tyranny, however, the *Vīdēvdād* turns what it initially presents as a cosmologic conflict into a political predicament. Insofar as *Airyanem Vaējō* constitutes territory that tyrants can usurp, it must *a fortiori* have its own, rightful form of sovereignty, potentially powerful enough to contest and repulse non-Aryan assailants. To the extent, then, as Vasilij Abaev puts it,

⁶⁸ *Vīdēvdād*, *Fargard* 1; *Fargard* 22.1.

⁶⁹ *Zamyād Yašt* 12. Text: Hintze 1994 and Humbach-Ichaporis 1998.

⁷⁰ For further details, see the *Greater Bundahišn* 4–6. The quotation is from 4.10.

⁷¹ *Vīdēvdād* 1.17. ⁷² See Darmetester 1892–93: 2:14 n. 38; Christensen 1943: 49–53.

“the dualism of nature becomes social dualism,”⁷³ the perennial conflict between Ahura Mazdā and Angra Mainyu will ultimately manifest itself phenomenologically as world history.

Sovereignty, in fact, constitutes the subject of the *Vīdēvdād*’s second *Fargard*, which relates the history of “Yima the good shepherd” – the first mortal with whom Ahura Mazdā spoke and the first to rule over *Airyanem Vaējō* as king (*xšaθre*).⁷⁴ Yima refused Ahura Mazdā’s offer to propagate the Mazdayasnian faith (*daēnā*); nonetheless, he made the world flourish and preserved living beings from the onset of “evil winter” by sheltering “the greatest, best, and finest” specimens of their various species in the *var-* (“fortress”), which Ahura Mazdā had him build. According to the *Kayān Yasn*, moreover, Ahura Mazdā invested Yima with the *kavaēm xʷarəṇō* – that is, divine radiance or majestic splendour, associated with the luminosity of the sun (*xʷar-*⁷⁵), which functioned as a sign of kingly stature, as well as victory over the adversaries of *Airyanem Vaējō*.⁷⁶ So Ferdowsī recalls in the *Šāhnāmeḥ*: “Jamšīd [=Yima] tied his waist with the kingly *farr* [NP <Av. *xʷarəṇah*], and the world fell under his spell.”⁷⁷ Eventually, however, Yima turned to Falsehood (*drug*), for which Ahura Mazdā dispossessed him, both of his kingdom and of the royal *xʷarəṇah*; in consequence, a *daēva* “cut” him, presumably in two. What the myth of Yima adumbrates, then, are the ideals to which all sovereigns of *Airyanem Vaējō* will henceforth aspire: to increase the bounty of the Aryan domain; to protect men, as well as beasts of the Good Spirit; to preserve the prosperity of his realm within the royal keep;⁷⁸ to radiate with good fortune the kingly *xʷarəṇah*; and, most importantly, to uphold and promulgate the tenets of the Mazdean faith.⁷⁹ That Yima proved delinquent in the latter was a lesson not lost on later rulers (*kāvayās*), who, in the words of the *Kayān Yasn*, promulgated the Good Religion (Phl. *weh-dēn*) “with such invincible benediction”⁸⁰ that the *Dēnkard* erects this into principle: “Essentially, royalty is *dēn* [<Av. *daēna*], and the *dēn* royalty, from which it also follows that anarchy is bad *dēn*, and bad *dēn* anarchy.”⁸¹ In *Airyanem Vaējō*, henceforward, rulership and religion stand in a relation of mutual support: the king is not a god, nor is he deified in death, but – to adopt the phrasing of the *Dādestān ī Dēnīg* – “in the name and with the power (*nērōg*) and help of the creator

⁷³ V. I. Abaev, cited in Panaino 2007: 23. ⁷⁴ *Vīdēvdād* 2.1–5. See Levalois 1987: 19–32.

⁷⁵ See *Greater Bundahišn* 26.63. ⁷⁶ See Bailey 1971: 1–77; Lentz 1962.

⁷⁷ Ferdowsī 1876–1877, 1:48–55; Ferdowsī 2006: 6–7.

⁷⁸ Cf. *Greater Bundahišn* 32 on the mansions (*māniha*) of the Kayanids.

⁷⁹ On the model Irānian king, see Christensen 1996: 39–57. ⁸⁰ *Yt.* 19.74.

⁸¹ *Dēnkard* 3.58.

(*dādār*) Ohrmazd and all the divine ones (*yazdān*),⁸² he battles against the *daēvas*.

II

For reasons that perhaps have more to do with ideology than ignorance, Īrānīan national history, as codified under the Sāsānid regime (224–651 CE), disregards the Achaemenid era.⁸³ As part of their project to centralize the Īrānīan state conjointly with the Mazdean religion,⁸⁴ Sāsānian rulers – rather than celebrating Kūruš (Cyrus), Kambūjiya (Cambyses), Dārayavahuš (Darius), Xšayāršā (Xerxes), or Artaxšacā (Artaxerxes) as their heroic forebears⁸⁵ – portrayed themselves instead as the orthodox descendants of Īrān’s primordial kings, in particular the Kayānid dynasty, as the Avesta represents it.⁸⁶ Hence, in the royal genealogy recognized by the *Greater Bundahišn*,⁸⁷ the Kayānid queen Hūmāy ī Vohūman is succeeded directly by Dārāy ī Dārāyān, whom Iskander Kēsar slew. Ardaxšēr ī Pāpagān claims the throne immediately thereafter, establishing a new lineage – putatively descended from Sāsān – which “put the empire in order, at the same time that it promoted the revelation of Mazdā-worship.”⁸⁸ At the crux of the Īrānīan succession, then, stands the regnal sequence: Dārā – Iskander – Ardaxšēr, where Iskander not only marks the break between the Kayānid and the Sāsānian regimes, but concomitantly articulates the link between them.⁸⁹ Whether or not “Dārā, son of Dārā” represents the ruler whom Greco-Roman writers know as Dareios III Kodomannos – and nothing in Pahlavī literature would point in this direction⁹⁰ – Iskander *Kēsar* unmistakably refers to Īrān’s great assailant from the West (*rūm*), Alexander III of Makedonia. Poised, then, between Avestan mythography and Sāsānian history, Iskander was, for Pahlavī writers, neither a casual nor a passing figure, but a personage essential to the orthodox constitution of the self-defined political and religious mission of the state.⁹¹ The *Dēnkard*, for example, the

⁸² *Dādestān ī Dēnīg* Int(o).

⁸³ “Achaemenid” < OldP *Haxāmanišiya*. On the structure and content of the national history, see Yarshater 1983.

⁸⁴ Christensen 1944; Shaked 1994; Daryae 2009. For Mazdaism in the Achaemenid period, see Boyce 1975–82: vol. II. For the Seleucid era, see Bilde *et al.* 1990; Boyce and Grenet 1991; Wiesehöfer 1994. For the Parthian period, see Unvala 1925; Colpe 1983; Verstandig 2001.

⁸⁵ For the problematic relationship of the Achaemenids to Mazdaism, see Boyce 1975–82: 82; Schwartz 1985.

⁸⁶ Daryae 1995. ⁸⁷ Cf. Christensen 1931. ⁸⁸ *Greater Bundahišn* 33.13–15.

⁸⁹ al-Ṭabarī 2007: 5: 2. ⁹⁰ See, however, al-Ṭabarī 2007: 4:87–95. ⁹¹ Cf. Bowersock 1997.

great encyclopedia of Mazdean lore compiled in the ninth century CE,⁹² explains:

Of the three most terrible plagues to have assaulted the Mazdayasnian *dēn* in the form of tyrants, over the course of the millennium of Zartušt: the first was Arjāsp of Xyōn, and many others with him; the second, Aleksandar the Greek (*rūmī*), a man of death and bad renown, and those who were with him; the third, the *Dēw*-with-the-Disheveled-Hair, and those who were with him.⁹³

In keeping with the dynasty's theocratic goals, Sāsānian rulers identified their empire with the Avestan *Airyanem Vaejō*, which they rendered in Pahlavī as *Ērān*, or *Ērānšahr*, set ideologically over and against the remainder of the world, which they relegated to *Anērān* (< Av. *airiia-/anairiia*-).⁹⁴ Thus the Sāsānian royal titulary reads: 'Mazdean Majesty, King of Kings, of *Ērān* and *Anērān*, whose reign is from the gods.'⁹⁵ Although a post-Parthian construction, *Ērān* transumes all previous Persian political formations, as if the Īrānian peoples had from the time of Yima down through Ardaxšēr I and his successors constituted a cohesive nation, within fixed, if flexible geographic bounds.⁹⁶

Striking, then, is not only the centrality that the *Dēnkard* accords Aleksandar in the history of *Ērānšahr*, but more so how his figure has become absorbed into Mazdean myth.⁹⁷ Arjāsp and the *Dēw*-with-the-Disheveled-Hair are assailants familiar from Avestan demonology,⁹⁸ and the *Dēnkard* places Aleksandar – "the man of death" – on precisely the same footing. 'Abbāsīd accounts of Mazdāism explain elsewhere that men who are destroyers effectively function as a *dēw* [< *daēva*], and this is the case with Aleksandar here.⁹⁹ As such, all three non-Aryan assailants that the *Dēnkard* names fulfill the programme of the *Vidēvdād*, insofar as they rush in to assault *Ērānšahr* from beyond its bounds. Thus, Aleksandar has become one of the principal players in the cosmic battle that Ohrmazd and Ahreman fight over *Ērān*, the one country in the world, according to the *Dēnkard*, not given over to corruption (*druwand*). This battle takes place both in what Sāsānian theologians recognized as the invisible-conceptual

⁹² On the *Dēnkard* as a project, see Menasce 1958.

⁹³ *Dēnkard* 3.345. ⁹⁴ See Daryaei 2008: 1–20.

⁹⁵ Inscription of Šāhpur I, 1. Sprengling 1940.

⁹⁶ See Daryaei 2002b.

⁹⁷ For the religious, as opposed to historical tradition, see Christensen 1931. On the characteristics peculiar to Īrānian myth, see Bausani 1966.

⁹⁸ On Arjāsp, see *Dēnkard* 8.11.4; on demons with hair, see Williams 1989. See further Christensen 1941.

⁹⁹ *Dēnkard* 3.404.

world (*mēnōg*), as well as in the realm of the visible-material (*gētīg*).¹⁰⁰ Hence, the only details of Aleksandar's career that interest Pahlavī writers are the "great brutality and violence"¹⁰¹ with which, as al-Tha'ālibī records, "he ordered the fire temples to be destroyed; killed the magi who served them; burned the books of Zardušt, written in gold ink; and destroyed all monuments, fortresses, and palaces in *Ērānšahr*."¹⁰² While collectively these deeds indicate the general havoc that the Makedonians wreaked upon *Ērān*,¹⁰³ singly each also functions as a synecdoche for one of the three regal duties that, according to Pahlavī writers, Aleksandar shirked: sovereignty (*xwadāyih*), protection (*pānāgih*) and religion (*dēn*). As regards Aleksandar's activities elsewhere in the world – that is, in *Anērān* – these Mazdāism could only look on with indifference, or judge as detrimental (*akōmand*). Inevitably, therefore, this occluded Īrānians from viewing Aleksandar's enterprise as what Claude Mossé still calls "the birth of a new world,"¹⁰⁴ much less what Tarn envisioned as "the unification of mankind".¹⁰⁵

The *dastwar* Syen reportedly predicted: "The actions of Aleksandar will be like those of winter,"¹⁰⁶ whereby he alluded not only to the first of the evils that Angra Mainyu visited upon *Airyanem Vaējō*,¹⁰⁷ but also to the fact that the bleakness of winter, as the *Greater Bundahišn* stresses, rotates into summertime.¹⁰⁸ Hence, one of the distinctive features of Pahlavī accounts of Aleksandar is that they emplot his assault upon *Ērān* according to the tropology that underwrites such *Gāθās* as the *Aṭ.tā.vaxšiiā Hāiti*, as well as compositions of the Younger Avesta, including the opening *Fargards* of the *vidēvdād*, as we have seen. Among such notices, which fill Pahlavī literature, Aturpāt ī Emētān, the compiler of the *Dēnkard*, focuses on the topos of Aleksandar setting fire to the Avestan scriptures.¹⁰⁹

The illustrious sovereign Kay Wištāsp decided to have [Zartušt's teachings] written up. He deposited all the records in the Royal Treasury, whence he ordered that all accurate copies be DISSEMINATED. Then he sent a copy to the Fortress of Archives (*diž ī nipišt*), and it is here that he had the information conserved.

In the course of all the disruptions that affected the *dēn* and the royalty of *Ērān* on account of the accursed Iskander, the copy that was in the Fortress of Archives was lost to fire, and the one that was in the Royal Treasury fell

¹⁰⁰ Cf. Stausberg 2008: 46–9.

¹⁰³ Ibid. ¹⁰⁴ Mossé 2001.

¹⁰⁷ See above, and Darmesteter 1880–87: I: 95 n. 4.

¹⁰⁹ See Bailey 1971: 149–76.

¹⁰¹ Vahman 1986: 191.

¹⁰⁵ Tarn 1933.

¹⁰² al-Tha'ālibī 1979: 414.

¹⁰⁶ *Dēnkard* 7.7.7 = Molé 1993, 71.

¹⁰⁸ *Greater Bundahišn* 35.

into the hands of the Westerners (*brōmāyīgān*), who TRANSLATED it into Greek (*yōyānīk*), along with other information transmitted by the Ancients.

Then His Majesty Ardashēr ī Pāpakān, King of Kings, arose to restore the realm of *Ērān* and so collected all the scattered writings of the faith into one place. Tansar, moreover, the Just . . . collated these materials with other information from the Avesta and so, on orders, completed [the scriptures] with these details. When he finished, it was as a flame descending from primordial light. It was then ordered that the copy be conserved in the Royal Treasury and that its contents be DIFFUSED according to accurate copies.¹¹⁰

Again here, “the inglorious scoundrel (*mar ī dušxwarrah*) Iskander, created of wrath”¹¹¹ occupies center stage in a tripartite drama where, in this case, two orthodox Īrānian kings – one Kayānian, the other Sāsānid – flank him as his foils. Kay Wištāsp represents a *Gāthic* figure, glorified in the Pahlavī *Wištāsp Yašt* as the first ruler to accept the Pure Religion,¹¹² while Kay Ardashēr, the Sāsānian hero of the Pahlavī *Kārnāmag ī Ardaxšēr ī Pābagān*,¹¹³ comes, according to the *Zand ī Wahman Yasn*, as the “arranger and restorer of the world.”¹¹⁴ The piece presents this through thought and expression that stand out as patently concentric. Thus, the ring composition of the plot (сюжет) – Kay Wištāsp consolidates the Avesta; Iskander destroys it; Ardashēr collects the pieces and puts them back together – finds verbal reinforcement in the repeated emphasis on conservation and diffusion: “He sent a copy to the Fortress of Archives” || “The copy in the Fortress of Archives was burned” || “[He] ordered that the copy be conserved in the Royal Treasury”; and so forth. As such, the passage effectively reproduces a figural pattern that goes back at least as far as the *Aṭ. tā. vaxšīiā Hāiti*.

	A		B		A ₁
Y. 30	yāmazdāθā	–	daēuuācinā	–	yāmazdā dadāt
	mazdā	→	daēuuā	→	mazdā
Aturpāt	Wištāsp / Avesta →		Iskander	→ Ardaxšēr / Avesta	
			↑		
			[Anērān]		
	Zaraθuštra			Tansar	
	Kayānid			Sāsānid	

¹¹⁰ *Dēnkard* 3.420.

¹¹¹ *Dēnkard*, cited in Bailey 1971: 154.

¹¹² See Y. 28.7, 46.14, 51.16, 53.2. For further legendary expansion, see Levalois 1987; Molé 1993.

¹¹³ Grenet 2003.

¹¹⁴ *Zand ī Wahman Yasn* 3.25.

Accordingly, Aturpāt's account bears with it all the cosmic, ethical, and apocalyptic overtones that its Avestan tropology entails. As in the earlier passage from the *Dēnkard*, Iskander rushes in here (*abar awēšān tazišn*)¹¹⁵ like a *dēw* to inflict misrule (*dušxwadāyih*) upon *Ērānšahr*.¹¹⁶ Aturpāt captures this onslaught through the arresting image of Iskander desecrating fire (*ātaxš*) – otherwise sacred to the *dēn*¹¹⁷ – by burning the pages of the Avesta,¹¹⁸ an act figuratively equivalent to the travesty of disseminating the Mazdean scriptures in Greek. Concerning which, the *Hērdebestān* observes: “He who teaches the Sacred Word to non-Īrānians (*anērān*) gives a tongue to a wolf.”¹¹⁹ Once again, then, Aturpāt's account narrativizes the *Gāthic* antithesis *vahiiō akəm*, where the Avesta¹²⁰ – itself a metonym for the *dēn* as a whole – now constitutes that which is better, over and against Iskander, who having “chosen the worst purpose,” remains “accursed” – *gizistag*: an epithet reserved elsewhere in Pahlavī parlance exclusively for Angra Mainyu.¹²¹ It follows, then, that Ardashēr's ability to repair the order (*aša-*) that Iskander wrecked not only allies him with Ahura Mazdā, but symbolically enacts the Great Renewal (*frašgird*) that the *Gāthās* promise at the end of the world, and this is ultimately the main point of the tale.

Western scholars generally adduce this passage as a textual history of the Avesta, a record, as Mary Boyce put it, of “the names of those who helped preserve the sacred texts of the Zoroastrians.”¹²² That “information” of this sort should constitute what the *Dādestān ī Dēnīg* calls the “true meaning” (*drust-cimih*) of the composition seems doubtful, however, not only because all of the protagonists here are well-known literary figures,¹²³ but more so because what the tale has to say about the Avesta it says in Avestan terms, a decentering that makes it impossible to take the composition as immediately “factual” at any point. It would be more accurate to say that the burden of the narrative is to represent cosmic process – not only the millennial struggle between Ohrmazd and Ahreman, but also the *relationship between* royalty and religion.¹²⁴ Just as Kay Wištāsp and Kay Ardashēr stand as model rulers,¹²⁵ insofar as they faithfully conserve and

¹¹⁵ Grenet 2003, 6.9.

¹¹⁶ On the Sāsānid view of usurpation, see the Inscription of Paikuli §4 (=Skjærvø 1983: 29).

¹¹⁷ Y. 36.3; see further, Darmetester 1892–93: 1:149–57; de Menasce 1964; Boyce 1968b; Riverso 2004: 72–99; Stausberg 2004: 3:127–54.

¹¹⁸ Cf. *Zādspram* 3.77ff. ¹¹⁹ *Hērdebestān* 19.6.

¹²⁰ On Pahlavi writers' competence in Avestan, see Zaehner 1955: 430–1.

¹²¹ Axworthy 2008: 30. See, for example, Grenet 2003: 8.8.

¹²² Boyce 1968a: 5. ¹²³ For Tansar, see Boyce 1968a: 1–25. ¹²⁴ See Levalois 1987: 55–61.

¹²⁵ See Christensen 1996: 39–57.

disseminate the teachings of the *dēn*, so Iskander – by contrast – when he destroys the Scriptures of the Good Religion, immediately visits anarchy upon *Ērān*. This, then, is the tenet that the *Testament of Ardashēr* formulates into an adage: “Religion is the foundation of royalty and the king the guardian of religion”¹²⁶ – hence the dazzling light that descends upon the reconstituted Avesta which restores to Ardashēr the *kavaēm x’ arənō*,¹²⁷ that is, the “mighty gleaming (*ax’ arətəm*) glory that Mazdā established (*mazda δātəm*)” as a sign for orthodox Īrānian kings.¹²⁸ The tale that Aturpāt has to tell, then, has less to do with the ruin of *Ērān*, than with Kay Ardashēr’s divinely sanctioned abilities to reverse – and therefore to nullify – the anarchic effects of Aleksandar’s impious campaign.

Historically, one of the lasting achievements of the Sāsānian regime was its introduction of the idea of Īrān.¹²⁹ The geography of *Airyanem Vaejō* was always vague, and the conglomerate empire of the Haxāmanišiya lacked the nominalism of a proper name.¹³⁰ For the Sāsānids, however, *Ērānšahr* first and foremost constituted a nation, not only in the sense of an ethnos with shared customs, values, language and religion, but also as a territory confined within specific bounds.¹³¹ Within the Sāsānid context, therefore, Aturpāt’s narration helps to validate these claims – even if retrospectively from the ninth century CE – insofar as it forges a historical genealogy that progresses cohesively from the rule of Kay Wištāsp, through the onslaught of Aleksandar, to Kay Ardashēr’s foundation of the Sāsānian state.¹³² Thus, Aturpāt not only conceptualises *Ērān* as a cultural and political unity:¹³³ Iskander constitutes the lynchpin of this totalization, insofar as he both introduces a break and fosters continuity.¹³⁴ On the one hand, he marks a caesura, a potential disjunction between the older world of the Avesta and the new Sāsānian theocracy. On the other, his assault (*ēbgatīh*), reconceptualized as interruption, provides the occasion from which to overcome this split – among other ways, as here, through the continued vigor of the Avesta. Hence, in *Kārnāmag ī Ardashēr ī Pābagān*, Ardashēr’s rise to supreme authority proceeds *az marg ī Aleksandar ī hrōmīg* – “from the death of Aleksandar the Greek.”¹³⁵ As the symbolic Other, then, of both the Kayānid and Sāsānian regimes, Iskander remains not only dialectically

¹²⁶ See Grignaschi 1996, cited in Briant 2003: 453.

¹²⁷ Cf. Soudavar 2003. ¹²⁸ For a magisterial overview, see Gnoli 1999.

¹²⁹ Gnoli 1989. ¹³⁰ Klīma 1967. See, however, Shahbazi 2005.

¹³¹ Cf. Wiesehöfer 1996: 151–221; Daryaei 2002b and 2009.

¹³² See Bailey, H. *et al.* 1968–1991: 3:359–477; Daryaei 1995 and 2002a.

¹³³ See Lacan 1966: 101–24. ¹³⁴ See Josephson 1997: 10ff. ¹³⁵ Grenet 2003: 52.

indispensable to the emergence and ideological formation of the historico-political entity that we still know today as ایران (‘Īrān’):¹³⁶ for Pahlavī writers, he constitutes the pivot around which the history of *Ērānšahr* turned.

In a famous page from his *Theses on the Philosophy of History*, Walter Benjamin remarked, “To articulate the past historically does not mean to recognize it ‘the way it really was’ (*wie es eigentlich gewesen* – Ranke). It means to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger.”¹³⁷ Ultimately, what Aturpāt’s account gives us is a miniature picture of the world as it appeared to Mazdāism on the brink of its annihilation under Islāmīc hegemony in the ninth century CE. While other narratives more favorable to Iskander certainly circulated popularly in Sāsānid *Ērān* (even if Theodor Nödecke’s conjecture of a Pahlavī *Alexander Romance* can no longer be maintained),¹³⁸ it was the official version of the Sāsānid court – presumably propagated through the (now lost) *Xwadāy-nāmag* (“Book of Lords”) – that formed the cornerstone of the Īrānian national tradition, whose outlines Aturpāt rehearses and, if our sample were extended, we would find it in Ferdowsī too. No less than in the foundational narratives of the West,¹⁴⁰ then, so too Iskander figures centrally in the self-conceptualization of Īrān, though for each constituency he does so in a different way. Whereas Hegel writes that “Aristotle impressed upon Alexander’s nature a deep perception of what is True (*was das Wahrfafte ist*),”¹⁴¹ for Aturpāt Aleksandar remains the archetypal follower of what the *Gāthās* call the Lie (*drug*). Thus, the *Vohu.xšaθrā Hāiti* reads: “The person who shall attempt to destroy us is different from us: he is a son stemming from the creator of the Lie (*drūjō*), and therefore maleficent to [all] those who exist.”¹⁴² Similarly, where Hegel praises Alexander for “opening the Oriental world to Europeans” and “spreading the maturity and peak of Greek civilization to the East,”¹⁴³ Aturpāt and other Middle Persian writers see nothing but the deliberate devastation of an *Ērān* cultured through the royalty and *dēn*. Recently, John D. Grainger has stressed that “from the point of view of [Alexander’s] victims . . . his career was a disaster,”¹⁴⁴ but such a post-colonial flourish remains – both for its categorical imperative and its pretence to literalization – largely beside the point. Between them, Greco-Roman and Īrānian historiographers figured Alexander/Iskander within two entirely different tropological frameworks, whose asymmetry it is not

¹³⁶ Cf. Benveniste 1934; Gnoli 1989; Axworthy 2008.

¹³⁷ Benjamin 1961: 270.

¹³⁸ For an authoritative overview, see Hanaway 1998.

¹³⁹ See Frye 1985; Tafazzoli and Khromov 1999.

¹⁴⁰ Shahbazi 1990.

¹⁴¹ See Selden forthcoming b.

¹⁴² See most recently, Green 2008.

¹⁴³ Hegel 1923: 649.

¹⁴⁴ Y. 51.10.

possible to resolve. One derives from Homer and Herodotus – with their predicative oppositions between East and West, rape and retribution, νόμος vs. φύσις, and so forth – while the other issues out of the antithetical, chiasmic, and synecdochic rhetoric of the Avesta. Neither the first nor the last of the assailants whom Ahreman will send against *Ērānšahr* – and hence, if pivotal, in no way unique – Iskander, as Ferdowsī will still characterize him in the *Šāhnāme*, was a “darkened soul,” a “malevolent [*dīv*] who, out of the baseness of his heart, . . . unjustly grasped the world.”¹⁴⁵ Whereas such Mazdean formulations may seem fanciful to Western historians, or better relegated to the realm of fiction, the “objective” biographies of Diodorus, Arrian, Plutarch, and their followers could only have impressed Pahlavī writers as ignorant, sacrilegious, evil (*druwand*), and hence patently a lie (*druxs*). Ironically, therefore, in this case, to choose Greco-Roman historiography as better (*vahyah*-), over and against the Sāsānian politico-religious *Weltanschauung* as bad (*aka*-), only rehearses the figuration of the Avesta and, from a Mazdean point of view, repeats the evil, wretched, heretic Iskander’s errors.¹⁴⁶

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PART III

Jews and Phoenicians

*Josephus' Esther and diaspora Judaism***Emily Kneebone***Josephus and Esther**

Josephus' twenty-book *Jewish Antiquities* or ἀρχαιολογία, written in the 90s CE, retells Jewish history from the Creation up to the events of the author's lifetime. Josephus repeatedly professes that his aim is to render the Hebrew scriptures into Greek without addition or omission.¹ This claim has been much discussed by scholars, and finds precedents in both Greek historiography and the Hebrew Bible, but gone are the days when we would have been tempted to accept Josephus' claim at face value.² As critics have long pointed out, Josephus often diverges considerably from his scriptural sources in the biblical half of the *Antiquities* (books 1–11), making innumerable large- and small-scale omissions from and additions to the Hebrew text. Josephus' repeated professions of fidelity to the scriptures are to be read less as a pledge of minutely accurate translation than as a proclamation of his adherence to a model of biblical and post-biblical 'history' that encompasses exegesis, adaptation, elaboration and compression.

Josephus, moreover, was fully aware of the cultural politics of translation. As he proclaims at the start of the *Antiquities* (*Ant.* 1.10–12), Josephus conceives of his project as analogous (and, indeed, superior) to the creation of the Septuagint under the patronage of Ptolemy II Philadelphus, whose pivotal role in commissioning a Greek translation of the Pentateuch from the Jewish elders is described at length in *Antiquities* 12. Like all translations, Josephus' paraphrase of the Hebrew Bible is by its nature a form of cultural mediation, yet Josephus also engages in much more than direct translation, reframing his material and explicitly setting out to explain

* This chapter revisits material I first addressed in Kneebone 2007. I am very grateful to *Ramus* for permission to incorporate those arguments here, and to Tim Whitmarsh for the invitation to return to that territory in this volume.

¹ *Ant.* 1.17; 10.218; cf. *Ant.* 1.196; 4.1; *Ap.* 1.42.

² For a summary of interpretations, see Feldman 1998: 37–46; Inowlocki 2005b.

and celebrate Jewish culture in a manner comprehensible and attractive to a first-century Greco-Roman audience.³ As a one-time Jewish insurgent and priest transplanted from Jerusalem to Rome and installed as a Roman citizen in Vespasian's former apartment, Josephus offers us the fascinating perspective of a diaspora Jew writing in Greek at the heart of the Roman Empire. Drawing from Hebrew (and possibly Aramaic) documents and traditions, as well as a substantial body of Greco-Jewish material, including the Septuagint, the *Antiquities* is saturated not only with Josephus' awareness of his own place within Greek literary history, but with his heightened consciousness of the place of Jewish culture in the contemporary Roman Empire.

This article examines Josephus' paraphrase of the Book of Esther in *Antiquities* II. Widely known as the aetiology for the festival of Purim, the biblical Esther narrative treats of the eponymous Jewish wife of Ahasuerus, king of Persia, and relates the fortunes of the post-exilic Jewish diaspora in Susa, at the heart of the Persian Empire.⁴ When the Jewish population is threatened with extinction at the hands of the courtier Haman, who has conceived an enmity towards Esther's uncle Mordecai, Esther reveals her Jewish identity to her husband and finally succeeds in saving her people and destroying the villainous Haman. Esther, however, is an unusual text: it is the only book of the Hebrew Bible never to allude to God, and to contain no direct reference to the covenant, the sacred institutions of Israel or Jewish religious practice. While both Rabbi Simeon ben Lakish and Moses Maimonides ranked Esther second only to the Torah in significance, the book has long engendered a fascinated revulsion in many of its readers, particularly in Christian contexts, and it has been heavily criticised for its notable lack (or writing-out?) of God, for its overt celebration of genocide and for the dubious moral qualities of its protagonists.

One important consequence of these idiosyncrasies is that the text of Esther survives in several recensions: in addition to the Hebrew Masoretic Text (MT), two extant Greek translations, or adaptations, of Esther – the Septuagint (LXX) and the much shorter Alpha Text (AT) – not only offer countless minor variations on the MT, but depart from it substantially by inserting six extended passages into the narrative.⁵ These lengthy

³ See e.g. *Ant.* 1.5, 9; 20.262.

⁴ Ahasuerus is equated by Josephus and the LXX with Artaxerxes, but is usually identified by modern scholars with Xerxes. Josephus' Hellenising nomenclature is telling, but this paper aims for ease of reference to the biblical narratives, speaking of 'Ahasuerus' not 'Artaxerxes', 'Vashti' not 'Aste', etc.

⁵ On which compare the substantial Greek additions to Daniel, a book which also survives in multiple recensions. The dating, both relative and absolute, of the three versions of Esther has been fiercely

additions, exsected by Jerome and later labelled apocryphal, correct the tale's theological 'oversights' and rectify the absence of God through a series of dreams, prayers and edicts. The two Greek versions of Esther also incorporate a number of novelistic elements into the narrative and depict a more polarised, separatist and mutually hostile relationship between Jews and Gentiles than is to be found in the MT. The Greek versions of Esther, which were probably composed in the second or first centuries BCE and circulated, at least in part, in an Egyptian context, allow us to observe the adaptation of the narrative to a new, Greek-speaking diaspora Jewish culture.⁶ As Lawrence Wills puts it, Esther 'is not so much a single, unique text as it is a snapshot of a literary tradition in progress'.⁷

Josephus continues this tradition. He includes Esther in his list of the twenty-two Jewish records (*Ap.* 1.40) and devotes the extensive central section of *Antiquities* 11 to the Esther pericope (*Ant.* 11.184–296). Drawing from both Hebrew and Greek versions of the tale,⁸ Josephus follows Greek Esther in introducing references to God, religion and prayer into the tale; he also carries the narrative even closer to the Greek romances in tone, elaborating on the psychological, dramatic, emotional, ironic and erotic elements of the biblical text. Yet Josephus' version of the tale also rejects the hostile separatism of Greek Esther and minimises the orientalisising slant of the scriptural portrait of Ahasuerus,⁹ crafting a narrative which raises important questions about assimilation, identity and conflicting loyalties in diaspora Jewish culture. For diaspora identity lies at the heart of the Esther narrative; as Daniel Boyarin and others have emphasised, the Book of Esther may be considered 'the founding text not only of Purim, but of Diaspora – indeed, the earliest and ultimately the privileged model of all diasporas'.¹⁰ After Cyrus' cessation of the Babylonian Captivity, narrated at the start of *Antiquities* 11, large numbers of Jews remained in Babylon or otherwise dwelled in dispersion throughout the Persian Empire, a state of affairs on which Haman pointedly comments, reminding the king that the Jewish people lies 'scattered' (διεσπάρθαι, *Ant.* 11.212; cf. LXX and AT 3:8) throughout his territory. Encapsulating the situation of diaspora (διασπορά) Judaism in the fifth century BCE, the Esther narrative offers Josephus, himself a diaspora Jew residing in Rome, a model through which

disputed and need not be discussed here; for details see Clines 1984; Fox 1991; Jobes 1996; Dorothy 1997; Tov 1999; De Troyer 2000.

⁶ See Bickerman 1944; Collins 2000: 110–12. ⁷ Wills 1995: 104–5.

⁸ Despite plausible conjectures to the contrary, there is no evidence that Josephus had access to an Aramaic Targum on Esther; cf. Seyberlich 1964.

⁹ On orientalism in Hellenistic Hebrew scripture see Barbour, this volume.

¹⁰ Boyarin 1994: 4.

to explore the possibilities and problems of diaspora Judaism, past and present.

The altered focus of a lived diaspora culture, this chapter will argue, emerges strongly and repeatedly in Josephus' paraphrase of the Esther narrative. The loss of a direct connection between Judaism and the covenanted land causes Josephus to place considerable weight on the role of *nomos*, or law, in the narrative, depicting a diaspora Jewish culture characterised by a unique cohesion but fraught with challenging, and potentially destructive, confrontations between different laws and value-systems. This is a tale which articulates the dilemmas of displaced Jews, a complex social mine-field which necessitates compromise, assimilation and dissimulation; this 'is writing in diaspora, about identity in dispersion and under threat'.¹¹ Yet this same culture is equally a cause for celebration, a catalyst for new formulations of Jewish identity. In retelling the story of Esther for a Greco-Roman audience, Josephus draws from the conventions of the Greek romance, elaborating substantially on quasi-novelistic elements already present in the Hebrew tale.¹² The generic framework of the Greek romance, with its emphasis on intrigue, heterosexual romance, thwarted conspiracies, dramatic reversals of fortune and, in several cases, the protagonists' transplantation into foreign cultures, lends itself well to such an undertaking. Josephus' fusion of Jewish and Greek literary forms in the Esther narrative bespeaks a distinctively diasporic poetics that capitalises on the conventions of the Greek romance as a vehicle for depicting divided loyalties, disguised and conflicted identities and the testing of firm moral codes.

Authority and law

Josephus' version of the Esther narrative is punctuated by encounters with interlacing, and often conflicting, laws emanating from different sources of authority (king, country, ancestral customs and religion). The clash of values that structures the biblical encounter between Haman and Mordecai is augmented by Josephus into an all-pervasive narrative obsession with different kinds of law, a sequence of competing claims to authority that fractures individual loyalties at every turn.

¹¹ Beal 1997: 14.

¹² On the novelistic character of the scriptural Esther, see Wills 1995 on the Greek and Hebrew versions; Meinhold 1975 and 1976, where Esther, with Joseph, is analysed as a 'Diasporanovelle'. For a catalogue of novelistic elements in Josephus' version of Esther, see Feldman 1970. This novelistic slant is typical of Josephus' approach in the *Antiquities* more broadly, as Braun 1934 first showed.

The story of Esther begins when Ahasuerus' first wife Vashti is banished by her husband for refusing to parade before the banqueting king and his assembled companions. While none of the three scriptural versions of the event (MT, LXX, AT) explains the reason for Vashti's refusal,¹³ Josephus explains in the *Antiquities* that it stems from Vashti's unwillingness to contravene Persian laws that forbid wives to be seen by strangers (*Ant.* 11.191).¹⁴ By drawing attention to these restrictive Persian laws and their consequences for the queen, and omitting the scriptural implication that Ahasuerus is simply drunk and impetuous, Josephus portrays a Vashti torn between the king's will and the established laws of her country. Two legitimate compulsions pull her in different directions, so that upholding one signifies a transgression of the other.¹⁵

Once Vashti has chosen the Persian law over her husband's will, however, Ahasuerus retaliates by using his capacity as law-maker to enforce that very authority which had been challenged by her adherence to the law. Summoning the Seven Counsellors, that heptad in charge of law in the Persian Empire, Ahasuerus creates a new law banishing his wife. The lovelorn king soon regrets his decision but finds himself powerless to act, his romantic desires impotent in the face of the law he himself has made: 'although he was in love with her and could not bear the separation, he was unable to be reconciled with her, because of the law, and was distressed at being unable to accomplish what he wanted' (*Ant.* 11.195). In contrast to the cold and childish biblical king, Josephus' Ahasuerus is a wretchedly human figure, able neither to overcome his desires nor to circumvent the law. We are presented in the *Antiquities* with a king torn between his emotions and his laws, unlike the piqued and inebriated Ahasuerus of the scriptures, who immediately moves on from Vashti (although not, according to the MT and LXX, from her punishment and the slight she has cast upon him). As Louis Feldman observes, 'there is in Josephus a shift of emphasis from Ahasuerus

¹³ Stating merely that she refused to come to her husband (Esth. 1:12). Rabbinical speculations on the reason for Vashti's refusal gravitate towards the fantastical: the Talmud claims that Ahasuerus demanded that his wife appear naked, whereupon the Angel Gabriel afflicted her either with leprosy or with a mysterious appendage (Heb. 'tail' or 'projection') growing upon her person; the queen was presumably too ashamed of this disfigurement to appear in public (*T. Megillah* 12b).

¹⁴ It has been objected, against Josephus, that we know of no such law (indeed, see e.g. Herod. *Hist.* 5.18, 9.110; Plut. *Art.* 5; Esth. 5.4ff.; Neh. 2:6). Paton 1908: 150 is overly hasty in dismissing Josephus' 'assumption' as 'therefore untenable'; this paper instead sets Josephus' explanation in the context of the repeated conflicts of laws and loyalties that permeate his Esther narrative.

¹⁵ An antinomy all the more acute for its Persian setting: the Hebrew Bible repeatedly claims that the law of the Medes and Persians was irrevocable and that the Persian king's edicts and statutes could never be rescinded (Esth. 1:19, 8:8; Dan. 6:9, 13, 16). This implication also underlies Josephus' subsequent statement that Ahasuerus was unable to bypass the law and be reconciled with Vashti.

the ruler of a great empire to Ahasuerus the lover, so characteristic of the Greek romances'.¹⁶ Josephus' portrait of the lovesick figure thwarted by the impediments of authority shares much with the conventions of the Greek novel; the irony here, however, is that the laws against which the king so impotently rages are *his own*.¹⁷

When, later in the narrative, Ahasuerus' second wife Esther comes to plead with her husband for the Jewish cause, she too knowingly contravenes the king's law, for Ahasuerus has created for himself yet another law: he is not to be approached unbidden, on pain of death (*Ant.* 11.205). In the king's terrible presence, and surrounded by armed guards enforcing this law (a Josephan innovation which seems to instantiate the law's dreadful potency), Esther faints in fear. The king's anger cedes to concern, and he takes Esther anxiously in his arms. Reassuring her that the law does not apply to her, Ahasuerus sets her fears at rest by placing his sceptre in her hand, exempting her from death (*Ant.* 11.237–9). The king's much-vaunted legal system falters in the face of his personal concern, and the law proves not unalterable after all. Josephus again gestures towards a novelistic reciprocity and the internal conflict of an emotive, erotic force pitted against the king's laws. Esther's emotional appeal succeeds in its subversion where Vashti's stubborn absolutism had failed, and Josephus' Esther is well aware of the tactics to employ, asking God to enhance her beauty and persuasiveness before she approaches the king (*Ant.* 11.232–3).¹⁸ Esther's resistance, moreover, is in turn encoded within the law, for Josephus goes beyond the scriptures in observing that Ahasuerus' side-stepping of the law is itself validated by the sceptre and thus effected in line with the law (*Ant.* 11.239). Laws, when opposed, take on an inexorable force which not even their makers can escape; a subtler negotiation, on the other hand, renders that law malleable and benign. Josephus softens the Hebrew emphasis on the intractability of Persian law (the notion that, once issued,

¹⁶ Feldman 1970: 151; cf. Lacoque 1990: 73 on the 'eroticization' of the Hebrew Bible.

¹⁷ Josephus' narrative, departing from the biblical Esther, here shares much with Chariton's depiction of the love-struck Artaxerxes II caught in an internal conflict between his romantic desires and his legal obligations. See Char. 6.1.10 and esp. 6.3.7–8, where Artaxerxes, despite his love for the beautiful Callirhoe, declares that he must abide by the laws that he himself has created.

¹⁸ This request for heightened beauty is unscriptural, and again recalls the Greek romances in its emphasis on the influence wrought by such beauty. On the contrast between Esther and Vashti, see Niditch 1995: 41. Without contrasting Vashti and Esther *within* the Esther narrative, Fisch 1994 maps Esther's mode of resistance onto a contrast between the implacable opposition depicted in the Hanukkah tale (corresponding to a festival ritual strictly encoded in the Mishnah) and the subtler negotiations of Esther (embodied in the far less rigorous obligations relating to Purim). As Fisch 1994: 65 remarks, 'if the Hanukkah story is one of heroic resistance, the Purim story is one of accommodation'.

the king's law could never be rescinded);¹⁹ here the king's law becomes a site not simply of obedience or disobedience, but of negotiation and compromise.

The most marked and significant conflict of laws in the tale, however, is generated when Esther's uncle Mordecai, a devout Jew, refuses to prostrate himself before the king's favoured vizier Haman. This act angers the latter inordinately and sets in motion Haman's plot against the Jews. While all three biblical texts state only that Mordecai refused to prostrate himself, Mordecai explaining simply that he was a Jew, Josephus explicitly presents the problem as a collision of laws (*nomoi*): the king has commanded that all shall pay obeisance to Haman (*Ant.* 11.209), yet Mordecai, because of his ancestral *nomos* (*Ant.* 11.210), refuses; he later declares that he will not transgress the *nomoi* of God for the sake of a man (*Ant.* 11.231). In response to Mordecai's disobedience, Haman denounces the Jews. His argument centres on the claim that their peculiar laws turn the Jews against Ahasuerus and his people, that the Jews deliberately isolate themselves from the rest of mankind and that Jewish laws are incompatible with loyalty to king and country. On his account, the Jewish race is 'unsociable and different in nature and does not have the same religion or laws as other races, but is hostile in its customs and habits both to your people and to all mankind' (*Ant.* 11.212). This is a charge of separatism all too familiar from aspersions cast upon the Jews from all quarters of the ancient world.²⁰ Ahasuerus, however, accepts these claims, and his edict against the Jews lauds Haman and vilifies the Jews in precisely the terms dictated by Haman, claiming there to be 'intermixed with all mankind a hostile people that has strange laws, is insubordinate to kings, is deviant in its customs, hates monarchy and is ill-disposed to our affairs' (*Ant.* 11.217).

Mordecai's loyalty to Ahasuerus is not, however, in question, for we have already heard that he once selflessly saved Ahasuerus' life, after which Josephus, again elaborating upon the scriptural accounts, has Ahasuerus allow Mordecai to remain in the palace as an 'intimate friend of the king' (*Ant.* 11.207). Josephus' narrative, however, makes no mention of the royal courtiers who, in all three scriptural versions, are shocked by Mordecai's refusal to obey the king's command (*Esth.* 3:3); instead, it is Haman himself who enquires about the reason for Mordecai's refusal to worship him, growing angry when he discovers that the dissident is a Jew. Mordecai, then, rebels not against Ahasuerus *qua* monarch but against Haman's

¹⁹ MT 1:19, 8:8; cf. Berg 1979: 87 n. 50.

²⁰ Similar claims are levelled, for instance, in Tac. *Hist.* 5.5; Juv. *Sat.* 14.100–2; Ael. Arist. *De Quatt.* 309; cf. also *Ant.* 4.137–8, *Ap.* 2.79, 121. See Feldman 2004: 58–9; Schäfer 1997: 209.

hubristic presumption, and it is not Mordecai but Haman who constructs the polarity between Jew and Persian, loyalty to God and loyalty to the king. Josephus here presents us with no inevitable conflict between Persian sovereignty and Jewish faith. It is perhaps significant, too, that while in the three scriptural accounts Haman offers Ahasuerus 10,000 talents only as an implicit bribe for destroying the Jewish race (Esth. 3:9), Josephus' Haman promises to give the king a vast 40,000 talents specifically to compensate him for the loss of tribute (φóρος, *Ant.* 11.214) which he would suffer once the Jews in his kingdom were destroyed. It seems not unlikely that Josephus includes this detail in order to indicate the degree to which the Jews, far from living in isolation, in fact acknowledged the king's authority and played a crucial role in the economy of the Persian Empire.²¹

After the intervention of Esther, the king finally sees through Haman's calumnies and allows Esther to repeal the charges in a second edict, this time aligning Ahasuerus' rule with the protection of God (and thereby with the Jews), declaring that the Jews live under the best kind of political system (*Ant.* 11.279) and allowing the Jews to live according to their own laws (*Ant.* 11.281). This is of enormous importance to Josephus' conception of Jewish life, and the excellence of the Jewish constitution and the importance of their laws is a theme explored extensively by Josephus in the *Antiquities*, and, later, the *Contra Apionem*. Josephus, indeed, programmatically declares at the start of the *Antiquities* that the political constitution (διδάτaxis τοῦ πολιτεύματος, *Ant.* 1.5) of the Jews is to be one of the two central topics that his work will treat.²² By 'political constitution' Josephus refers to the system of Mosaic Laws which, according to his repeated claims, act as the focal point of Jewish identity and pride. As Josephus states in the *Contra Apionem*, 'if any one of us were asked about the laws, he would state them all more easily than his own name. Accordingly, learning them thoroughly from the first moment of perception, it is as if we have them engraved on our souls; it is rare for someone to transgress them, and exoneration from punishment is impossible' (*Ap.* 2.178). Jews, declares Josephus, would be readier to die than to renounce their allegiance to the law. Mordecai's refusal to bow down to Haman thus fits into a larger pattern of Jewish adherence to the law even under extreme duress, reiterated throughout the *Antiquities* and *Contra Apionem*.²³

²¹ Cf. *Ant.* 11.23, where the Samaritans falsely denounce the Jews to the Persians by claiming that they will refuse to pay tribute or obey the king.

²² Mason 1998: 81: 'In Josephus' view, the *Antiquities/Life* was from start to finish about the Judean constitution.'

²³ E.g. at *Ant.* 3.223, 317; 18.274; *Ap.* 1.43, 190, 212; 2.146, 175, 219, 233, 235.

Josephus' usage of the word *nomos* ('law'), however, is characterised by a certain elasticity.²⁴ In general Josephus uses the term to refer to the Torah or Mosaic Law (both the laws in the abstract and the physical document in which they appear), a translation standard throughout the LXX.²⁵ Yet for Josephus the term also designates the traditions which grew out of these laws; in his use of the term, as Steve Mason has noted, 'Josephus disallows any formal distinction between the written code of Moses and the customs or traditions of the Jews'.²⁶ There is, however, nothing specifically Jewish about the term *nomos* in Josephus' usage, for each nation abides by its own constitution and *nomoi*. Indeed, part of Josephus' objective in the *Antiquities* and *Contra Apionem* is to compare the Jewish laws with those of other nations, emphasising the ultimate superiority of the Jewish laws.²⁷ Throughout the *Antiquities* and *Contra Apionem*, then, Josephus constructs Judaism as a *politeia* ('constitution') whose subjects are defined by participation and devotion. For Josephus, as for other Jews of this time, 'faithful observance of the Mosaic Law . . . [was] seen as a sort of civil obedience', and the term *politeia* was consequently used to denote 'the bond that united the Jews of the Greek diaspora, who were therefore πολῖται [*politai*, i.e. 'citizens']'.²⁸ The law, on this conception, would remain constant and indispensable through all the vicissitudes of political rule and the transient ownership of land, the impermanence of which Josephus knew all too well. As he states, 'even if we are deprived of wealth, cities, and other good things, at least the law endures for us immortal, and no Jew, however far he may go from his homeland, or however much he fears a cruel master, will not fear the law more than him' (*Ap.* 2.277).

Without recourse to a land-based conception of Judaism in these times of dispersal, Jewish communities outside Israel frequently placed weight on law rather than location in the cohesion of their scattered populations.

²⁴ See esp. Mason 1991: 96–106.

²⁵ Although the root meaning of Torah is 'instruction' or 'teaching'. See now Rajak 2009: 22–3, 164–5, with further bibliography, on this semantic shift in the LXX; as she notes at 22, 'the semantic range of the term *nomos* expands, through frequency of Greek-Jewish use, rather than that of "Torah" shrinking to "law" alone'.

²⁶ Mason 1991: 104.

²⁷ νόμος is therefore used by Josephus, alongside e.g. δῆταγμα, for Persian laws and edicts in the Esther narrative, including those consistently represented in the MT by the Persian loan-word *dat* and cognates. In collapsing Jewish scripture and customs as well as Persian laws and edicts into the Greek νόμος, Josephus' narrative both encourages comparison between Jewish and Persian laws and foregrounds the potential for collision between the two.

²⁸ Troiani 1994: 17, 18; cf. Barclay 1996: 425–6; Schwartz 1983–84; Goodman 1994: 61; Spilsbury 2005: 221–4. Cohen 1990: 218 points out that πολῖται in this context denotes far more than 'constitution' alone, encompassing a holistic sense of Jewish 'culture' or 'lifestyle' at large.

Adherence to the Torah became a means of marking out and distinguishing Jews from their Gentile neighbours, creating an imagined community of worshippers across the inhabited world. It is striking, in this context, that throughout the *Antiquities* Josephus avoids explicit reference to the covenanted status of Israel, so prominent in the Hebrew Bible, instead emphasising a pan-geographical Jewish fidelity to the *nomoi* and *politeia* of Moses.²⁹ Thus, as Betsy Halpern Amaru has observed in her study of land theology in the *Antiquities*, 'Judaism for Josephus is a religion of law, or virtue, of obedience to God's statutes. . . . In Josephus the martyr dies not for the land but for the law.'³⁰ This we may observe in Josephus' depiction of the prayer offered up by Mordecai after Ahasuerus' first edict, one of Greek Esther's lengthy additions to the Hebrew narrative. In the LXX and AT (4:17b-i) Mordecai's prayer makes no mention of law, but is instead replete, as is the prayer of Esther which follows it, with references to Israel and the covenant. Josephus, by contrast, focuses on Mordecai's concern about transgressing the laws (νόμοι) of God; no mention is made of the covenant or the land of Israel, and the people pray instead for the diaspora populations, those Israelites scattered throughout the earth (τοὺς ἐν ἀπάσῃ τῇ γῇ Ἰσραηλῖτας, *Ant.* 11.231).

Integration

If Josephus consistently downplays the importance of God's exclusive promise of the covenanted land, then the corollary of this is his conception of a Judaism which extends, gloriously, throughout the world. References to Jewish colonies and dispersal abound in the *Antiquities* (far more so than in the scriptures),³¹ and at *Ant.* 4.115–16 Josephus pointedly rewrites Balaam's prediction in Numbers to create a triumphant vision of the widely disseminated Jews of the future inhabiting all corners of the inhabited world. In doing so, Josephus renders almost inevitable the comparison between Balaam's words and the diaspora Judaism of Josephus' own day. Parallels have long been noted between different phases in

²⁹ The weight accorded Moses and his laws in the *Antiquities* is further echoed by Josephus' frequent references to his projected treatise on Jewish customs and laws (see esp. *Ant.* 20.268).

³⁰ Halpern Amaru 1981: 229. Cf. Schwartz 2005: 77: 'concerning Ἰουδαϊκός, if one compares the *War* and the *Antiquities*, Josephus' usage seems to show a growing notion of the Jews as people defined not by virtue of their relationship to a place, but, rather, by virtue of their relationship to a religion'.

³¹ As Halpern Amaru 1981: 214 notes, 'colonies and the spread of Jews into diaspora living are significant aspects of [Josephus'] notion of the promises to Abraham', as indeed they are for Jacob (*Ant.* 1.282); cf. the connection between the refusal to create colonies and the construction of the Tower of Babel (*Ant.* 1.110–11).

Josephus' history of the Jews; in creating a bipartite structure for the *Antiquities* Josephus invites implicit comparison between the first and second halves of the book, between scriptural and contemporary events, the First and Second Temple periods.³² The position of the Esther narrative in the *Antiquities*, recounted almost immediately after the half-way point of the work, foregrounds the parallel with its temporal counterpart, the putative continuation of the history beyond Book 20 to Josephus' own time. That the Jewish War and the Babylonian Captivity should be aligned in this way is hardly surprising in view of the profound legacy of both events on the Jewish consciousness; the positions of diaspora Jews in the Persian and the Roman empires were readily aligned as tangible symbols of the fate of the Jewish people.³³

Yet analogies between the Persian and Roman empires need not be wholly negative. After all, Josephus too was a Jew who, like Mordecai, was brought from Jerusalem to live a well-connected life at the heart of a great empire. The troubles faced by Mordecai and Esther symbolise the difficulties of a Jewish people in a land far from Israel, yet they also provide a model for the promise of divine providence and the possibility of living a successful Jewish life in a foreign land. Significantly, then, Josephus makes much of the positive elements of Persian rule in the narrative. Josephus' Ahasuerus, as we have seen, is no longer the weak and foolish character of the scriptural tradition, the risible monarch about whom the later midrashim are so scathing, but an earnest and industrious ruler at once more vigorous and more sympathetic to the Jewish cause. Whereas the biblical Ahasuerus has been described as 'a lumpish, indifferent mass, not inherently vicious, not anti-Jewish, but erratic, childish, apathetic, and pliable', in Josephus he is a powerful and dignified figure who takes his regal duties seriously and who displays genuine concern for the plight of Esther and her fellow Jews.³⁴ It seems not unlikely that this favourable portrayal of Ahasuerus was effected with Josephus' own imperial connections in mind, for the situation of Esther and Mordecai in the court at Susa lends itself to an association with Josephus' position under the Flavians in Rome, a parallel which Josephus exploits more than once in his narrative.³⁵

³² Cf. Bilde 1988: 89–90.

³³ A parallel encouraged by the Danielic conception of history as a series of empires ruling the world, and the Jewish people, in turn. Cf. *BJ* 5.367; *Ant.* 10.205–9.

³⁴ Fox 1991: 176. Feldman 1970: 163 rightly characterises the Ahasuerus of the *Antiquities* as 'a serious monarch' and a 'statesmanlike king'.

³⁵ As at *Ant.* 11.249, where the two unscriptural figures inserted by Josephus into the annals echo Josephus' own receipt of land and privileges as a reward for his loyalty to the emperor, as narrated in

In addition to suggesting parallels between Persia and Rome, moreover, Josephus goes out of his way to discredit the accusations of Haman and to dissociate the villain from the Persian court. Haman, we are told, is no Persian but a foreigner and a leach upon Persian hospitality, a greedy and ambitious man whose deceit is all the more distressing for his having exploited the regard in which he was held at Susa (*Ant.* 11.277). Haman's misdeeds in the *Antiquities*, indeed, far exceed those in the MT, for in Josephus Haman is accused of plotting against Ahasuerus himself, thus doubly distancing him from the Persian cause (*Ant.* 11.278). Crucially, Haman's reliability is also discredited by Josephus from the outset on the grounds that his hostility stems not from any misdeed on the part of Mordecai or the Jewish people, but from an aggression motivated by ancestral vengeance, a long-standing tribal hostility which has little to do with the realities of Judaism under the Persian Empire. For Josephus, again moving beyond the scriptural accounts, repeatedly points out that the Haman of the *Antiquities* is an Amalekite: a descendent of Amalek, eternal and archetypal enemy of the Jews.³⁶ Josephus, in other words, goes out of his way to present Haman's allegations about the Jews as a mere pretext used by Haman to destroy his traditional enemy, part of a broader, historically motivated, attack on the Jews and so invalidated as an accurate 'report' of Jewish isolationism in the Persian Empire. This is a tactic also employed to great effect by Josephus in the *Contra Apionem*, where we are repeatedly referred to national or historical grudges (chiefly on the part of Egyptians) which are used by Josephus to explain the behaviour of detractors of Judaism.³⁷

Ahasuerus' final edict recognises the excellence of the Jews and grants them further autonomy, ordering the governors of the empire 'to permit the Jews to live in peace under their own laws' (*Ant.* 11.281). This emphasis upon Persian tolerance of Jewish laws, fundamental already to the scriptural Esther, is crucial to Josephus' conception of life under the Persian (and indeed, the Roman) Empire. For diaspora Jews, the freedom to continue their customs was understandably central to their ability to function as a community, and Josephus goes out of his way to emphasise Roman

the *Life*. Josephus also depicts himself there, like Mordecai, as the victim of slanderous accusations made to the emperor by wicked courtiers; as in the Esther narrative, these plots are thwarted by the emperor and by God, the detractors executed and Josephus rewarded (*Vita* 422–5). Cf. Daube 1976; 1980: 29–31.

³⁶ *Ant.* 11.209, 211, 277. The MT refers to Haman as an Agagite (usually interpreted to imply Amalekite descent), while the LXX identifies Haman as a Bougaean and the AT, intriguingly, makes him a Macedonian. Cf. Feldman 2004: 27.

³⁷ E.g. at *Ap.* 1.70, 223–6. See Barclay 2004.

magnanimity in tolerating such customs. In the *Contra Apionem*, to take but one example, Josephus counters Apion's accusations that Jews refuse to set up statues of the emperors by praising Roman tolerance of Jewish laws and reiterating Jewish loyalty to the emperors despite the restrictions of their aniconic religion (*Ap.* 2.73–7). This ideal (if not always realised) Roman tolerance is discussed at length in Book 16 of the *Antiquities*, where the Jews of Ionia, whose customs are coming increasingly under threat from the Greeks, protest that the Romans had allowed them to live in accordance with their own laws (*Ant.* 16.28) and where at 16.16off. Josephus cites a lengthy series of Roman decrees granting diaspora Jewish populations the right to follow their own laws and customs, ending with an extraordinary authorial plea for tolerance and understanding of difference in other societies as under the Romans (16.174–8).³⁸

Josephus' portrayal of Jewish life in the Esther narrative, then, emphasises the understanding between Jews and Gentiles (although not to the extent of downplaying the genocide with which the tale concludes) and avoids the aggressive Jewish separatism and anti-Gentile sentiment which is so pronounced in the Greek versions of the tale. Contrast the prayer of Esther in the LXX:

You know that I hate the repute of the lawless and loathe the bed of the uncircumcised and of any foreigner. You know my constraint, that I loathe the symbol of my proud position that is on my head on the days when I am in public; I loathe it like a menstrual rag and I do not wear it on the days when I am in private. And your slave has not eaten at Haman's table, and I have not honoured the king's symposium, nor have I drunk the wine of libations. (LXX 4:17u–x)

Josephus allows Esther no such caustic outburst, but simply notes that 'Esther too supplicated God according to her ancestral custom' (τῷ πατρίῳ νόμῳ, *Ant.* 11.231); and while the LXX claims that Esther did not change her way of life on marrying Ahasuerus (LXX 2:20), Josephus instead describes the marriage between Esther and Ahasuerus as a cohabitation (συνῳκησεν, *Ant.* 11.203).³⁹

³⁸ A plea which Rajak 2005: 92 characterises as 'a remarkably contemporary appeal for a multi-ethnic or multi-cultural society under the aegis of Rome', and which, as she notes, 'is a vision hard to parallel in ancient literature'.

³⁹ The Greek scriptures, on the other hand, make no reference to συνῳκησις, and rabbinical writings tend rather to stress the separation of Esther and Ahasuerus. Later, the *Zohar* even denies that Esther ever lived with Ahasuerus; instead, God supposedly sent a substitute spirit which took her form. See *Zohar*, 3, 275b–276b and, even more forcefully, *Tiqunei Zohar* 2of. Cf. Bronner 1995: 185.

Concealment

It is worth pausing, however, to reflect upon this question of assimilation. Esther hides her Jewish identity from Ahasuerus until the very end of the tale, her revelation saving her people and destroying Haman. In order for this tactic to succeed, however, Ahasuerus must be wholly unaware of her Jewish identity prior to that point, indicating the degree to which Esther has concealed her origins and integrated herself within Persian culture. The Talmud, Targumim and later midrashim, indeed, read Esther's concealment as the key to her diaspora identity: in addition to her 'hidden' Jewish identity, the young Esther was supposed to have hidden herself in seclusion for years before God bade her enter the palace.⁴⁰ The name 'Esther' is linked to the word 'conceal' in Hebrew, an etymology on which the Talmud repeatedly dwells: 'Why then was she called Esther? Because she concealed [*masteret*] the facts about herself, as it says, *Esther did not make known her people or her kindred* [Esth. 2:20]'.⁴¹ Tractate Hullin elaborates: 'From where does the Torah bring the name Esther? From the verse "But I [God] will surely conceal my face [*haster astir panai*] on that day [Deut. 31:18]."'⁴² This resonates with the diaspora setting of the Esther tale, for the God of the Hebrew Bible frequently hides his face as a sign of anger or of distance from his people in exile; the interpretation of this 'encoded' verse of Deuteronomy was thus taken to signal that Esther would redeem her people at a time when God's face was hidden, when the Jewish people languished in exile, scattered in foreign lands.⁴³ Esther, in other words, could be read as a symbol of the troubles and hopes of diaspora Jews, those on whom God appeared to have turned his back and whose fate seemed uncertain, yet who are finally saved and granted victory and peace. As Bronner observes, '[t]he concealment theme, as embodied in the name Esther, would increasingly be understood to set the pattern for life in the diaspora, when God's providence would assume a more subtle mode.'⁴⁴

Esther's hiddenness may function as a symbol of hope for the future of diaspora Judaism, but this trope of concealment also creates an unsettling air of dissimulation which pervades the tale and raises important questions

⁴⁰ In *Midrash Panim Aherim* 2:2 Esther hides herself for a mere four years; *Targum Esther II* 2:7 and *Genesis Rabah* 39:20 allot her a lengthy seventy-five.

⁴¹ *Babylonian Talmud Megillah* 13a.

⁴² *Babylonian Talmud Hullin* 139b, a concept developed in *Midrash Tehillim* 22; cf. *Targum Esther II*. 2.8. See Baldwin 1984: 27.

⁴³ As in the psalms of lamentation: 'O Lord, how long will you hide your face.' E.g. Ps. 89:47; Ps. 74 9–10; Ps. 13:2, etc. See Balentine 1983; van Unnik 1993.

⁴⁴ Bronner 1995: 181.

about the tenability of a specifically Jewish identity in the diaspora. How can our heroine, this ambassador of the Jewish faith, not only hide but *successfully* hide her Jewishness from her husband?⁴⁵ This is a question which has long perplexed readers of Esther, and which Josephus leaves far less certain than either the LXX or AT. Faced with similar ambiguities in the Hebrew text, rabbinical discussions focus on Esther's fidelity to the mitzvot, often vehemently insisting that Esther kept to Jewish prescriptions whilst in the palace, observing the Sabbath, the laws of kashrut and so forth. In Josephus, however, we find no claim that Esther despises Gentile customs, and her abstention or participation in Persian customs is left entirely open to interpretation. Contrast Daniel and his relatives, who on Josephus' account *do* meticulously observe the dietary laws (*Ant.* 10.190–4). Thus, for all that Humphreys may claim that the Book of Esther 'affirms for the Jew of the diaspora the possibility of living a creative and rich life in the foreign environment . . . and also of remaining a devoted and loyal member of his community of fellow Jews', the practical components of this dual, acculturated yet loyally Jewish, identity remain strangely elusive.⁴⁶ John Barclay's sketch of Jewish identity in the Mediterranean diaspora concludes with an attempt to assess the practical distinctions which, 'by their regular practice, marked off diaspora Jews from their neighbours and thus gave definition to Jewish identity'.⁴⁷ On his account, those practices in which Jewish difference was 'visible, habitual and of social importance' are: the rejection of alien and pluralist cult, separatism at meals, male circumcision and Sabbath observance.⁴⁸ Yet, apart perhaps from the first, for which we have little evidence, but at least no indication to the contrary, none of these categories fits the Esther tale without difficulty.

The pervasive sense of uncertainty about Esther's Jewish self-definition is exacerbated, for instance, by the fact that, as a woman, she does not conform to the taxonomy of the circumcised and non-circumcised which usually distinguishes Jews from Gentiles.⁴⁹ To return for a moment to Josephus' own times, Martin Goodman has argued that it was precisely in these final years of the first century CE, in the wake of Vespasian's institution of a poll tax on all Jews of the Roman Empire (70 CE), that the question of who was or was not defined as a Jew gained particular prominence for Jewish communities in the Roman world.⁵⁰ In the interests of exacting that tax

⁴⁵ Cf. Bickerman 1951: 125. Cf. Berlin 2001: 27. ⁴⁶ Humphreys 1973: 216.

⁴⁷ Barclay 1996: 428. Compare the 'focal points of distinctiveness' outlined by Dunn 1991: 28.

⁴⁸ Barclay 1996: 429.

⁴⁹ As at LXX and AT 4:17u, where Esther declares that she hates the bed of the uncircumcised, or AT 4:17e, where Mordecai declares that he will not bow to the uncircumcised Haman.

⁵⁰ Goodman 2007.

in the following decades, Domitian is known to have prosecuted Jews who concealed their origin or practised their religion in private but who did not publicly acknowledge their Jewish identity; in the face of such demands for 'proof' of identity, it is circumcision, the one external and ineradicable marker of Judaism, which often bore the weight of this classificatory directive.⁵¹ Troublingly, however, by the end of the Esther narrative even circumcision provides no proof of Jewish identity. For when the king's second epistle announces the imminent destruction of all enemies of the Jews, the masses rush to declare themselves Jewish. The MT declares that 'many of the peoples *mityahadim* [became or professed themselves Jews], for fear of the Jews had fallen on them', whereas the LXX claims that 'many of the peoples περιετέμοντο καὶ ιουδαίζον [were circumcised and became Jews] out of fear of the Jews' (Esth. 8:17). Josephus declares simply that 'many even of the other peoples, out of fear of the Jews, περιτεμνόμενα [were circumcised]' and so managed to avoid danger (*Ant.* 11.285). The dynamics of concealment are reversed and refracted: whereas previously Jewishness had been concealed and threatened, the tables are now turned to place non-Jewish identity under siege. Yet Josephus' wording is telling, for he speaks not of 'becoming Jewish', but rather of the process of circumcision, the corporeal marker of Judaism; on his account, being circumcised does not necessarily equate to 'being' a Jew.⁵² No longer is faith clearly inscribed on the body, for in this time of assimilation and dissimulation, the clear correlation between external and internal, signifier and signified, has lost its validity. This is a problem to which Josephus returns in the *Vita*, where he relates that he alone forbade Gentile refugees from being forcibly 'converted' through circumcision, since this, he claims, can be no guarantee of faith or consistency of heart. The link between internal and external can be difficult to discern, and the matter of identifying a Jew cannot always be taken for granted (*Vita* 112–13).⁵³

The interaction between Jews and Gentiles in the Esther narrative, then, operates within an all-pervasive context of dissimulation and concealment. Esther's declaration of her Jewish identity is motivated only by the catalysing actions of Mordecai and Haman; conversely, it is precisely the knowledge that Mordecai is a Jew which endangers the whole people (*ethnos*) in the first place. Esther, indeed, is initially reluctant to reveal herself and rescue her people, and after the failure of his first request for

⁵¹ As in Suet. *Dom.* 12.2, an account of a ninety-year-old man forced to expose himself in court so as to establish whether he was circumcised, and so subject to the Jewish tax.

⁵² Cf. Schwartz 2007: 96; Spilsbury 1998: 215.

⁵³ All the more when we take into account Josephus' evident awareness that Jews were not the only people to practise circumcision. See *Ap.* 1.169 and 2.142, citing Herodotus on the subject.

help from Esther, Josephus' Mordecai is driven to order (κελεύειν) her 'not to look out for her own safety but the common safety of the people' (*Ant.* 11.227). As Clines' experimental analysis of the Hebrew text demonstrates, Esther's cultural assimilation may here be read as subservience, her secrecy as cowardly renunciation: 'the narrative sees itself as promoting racial identity, stressing collective action, experience and memory. What it celebrates, however, is a deliverance achieved through *denying* one's Jewishness.'⁵⁴ Tellingly, Esther's Jewish name, Hadassah, mentioned at MT 2:7, is never cited in Greek Esther or in Josephus. We may again contrast Daniel and his companions, who are given new Babylonian names by the king, but who nevertheless adhere strongly to their Jewish way of life (and are still called Daniel rather than Belteshazzar, Hananiah rather than Shadrach and so on).⁵⁵ Esther's very name, in other words, privileges her Persian rather than her Jewish connections.

Yet should we really frame the issue of Esther's (or, indeed, a wider diaspora Jewish) identity in terms of a choice between Persian (host) culture and Judaism? This kind of opposition, after all, evokes the reductive rhetoric of a Haman, a polarity which Josephus goes to great lengths to discredit as an outsider's attempt to drive an artificial wedge between Persians and Jews. Diaspora societies are by their nature structured around a complex nexus of (often troubling) struggles, interplays and, to use James Clifford's term, 'entanglements' between cultures; as Clifford emphasises, 'diaspora cultures cannot claim an oppositional or primary purity. Fundamentally ambivalent, they grapple with the entanglement of subversion and the law, of invention and constraint – the complicity of distopia [*sic*] and utopia.'⁵⁶ Josephus' version of the Esther tale continually sets itself against the reductiveness of binary oppositions, against a discourse in which diaspora Judaism emerges as a monolithic entity positioned against the host nation, an identity notionally the same for Esther as it is for Mordecai, for Josephus and for all other diaspora Jews. Yet the fact remains that Haman provides by far the strongest and most coherent model of Jewish identity in this narrative, despite – or perhaps because of – its misleading falsity. His rhetoric is compelling precisely because it simplifies and sharpens the edges of this diaspora culture, a messy hybrid constituted by what Said has termed a 'contrapuntal' plurality of experiences.⁵⁷

Stan Goldman has observed of the Hebrew Esther that '[t]he very heart of the matter in Esther is survival in the Diaspora, a paradoxical, ironic union of what is normally seen as incompatible – assimilation and Jewish

⁵⁴ Clines 1998: 18; cf. 19–20.

⁵⁵ In Josephus as in the Bible: *Ant.* 11. 189; cf. *Dan.* 1:7.

⁵⁶ Clifford 1994: 319.

⁵⁷ Said 1984: 171–2, of exile.

identification'.⁵⁸ Yet this union is far from simple. If the Greek scriptural versions of Esther insist upon a protagonist who loathes her husband and refuses to change her way of life, a world in which Jews and Gentiles stand implacably opposed (and yet in which Ahasuerus had oddly failed to perceive his wife's otherness), then Josephus uses the Esther narrative to articulate a different kind of diaspora consciousness, one based upon principles of tolerance, respect and integration, a vision whose resonance with Roman imperial culture can hardly be overlooked. In retelling the Book of Esther for a new audience, Josephus aligns the predicaments of diaspora Jews in the Persian and Roman empires in a predominantly positive fashion, whilst simultaneously distancing Haman and other detractors of Judaism from these paradigms of cultural integration.

Yet Josephus' Esther narrative simultaneously reveals the fissures within such a vision: if adherence to Jewish laws and customs is seen as the binding thread of Jewish diaspora identity, then how are these laws to be reconciled with the (necessarily in part contradictory) laws of the host nation? Josephus' incessant evocation of the concept of *nomos*, as this chapter has argued, points to a quintessentially diaspora consciousness, a culture in which adherence to the law, or Torah, is of paramount importance to an imagined community of Jews who can no longer be defined in terms of their geographical location. At the same time, however, Josephus' emphasis on the repeated conflict of different laws and value-systems signals his awareness of the problems generated by any attempt to maintain a specifically Jewish identity within an integrated diaspora society. Josephus may advocate tolerance and adaptation, yet his version of the Esther narrative, with its conflicting laws and fractured code of signifier and signified, offers us a complex and ultimately ambiguous model of assimilation and Jewish diaspora identity.

⁵⁸ Goldman 1990: 26.

The Eastern king in the Hebrew Bible
Novelistic motifs in early Jewish literature

Jennie Barbour

Among the characters from Greek literature who may have ventured the less-travelled way across the Mediterranean and wandered into Hebrew texts, one prominent figure is the Greek stereotype of the Persian king, the cartoonish sybarite first made popular by Aeschylus' *Persians* and with a long afterlife that goes all the way to T. S. Eliot's journeying magus remembering his native court with 'The summer palaces on slopes, the terraces, and the silken girls bringing sherbet'. This exotic creature, with an existence more literary than real, has left an imprint on those Jewish sources which loosely group themselves together as prose fictions, emerging late in the biblical period; the *Gestalt* of the Eastern king in the Hebrew Bible therefore offers a window into the ease with which prose fiction participates in the mechanisms of intercultural transfer.¹

Tracing the presence of the Greek character in the Jewish texts is easily liable to short-circuit. A people as much conquered and ruled as the inhabitants of Jerusalem in the late biblical period must have had a complex and multi-layered idea of what a king looked like; any written rendition of a foreign ruler within the Bible is already a tissue of different influences. One of these influences is the real experience of Persian and earlier Near Eastern dominion, before any mediated Greek reflexes of it: we see such representations of Persian rule within the Hebrew Bible in Isaiah's Cyrus, or the Jewish-Persian diplomatic relations in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. Teasing apart the traces of a specifically Greek version of the Persian king from these directly sourced Persian elements is already a delicate operation. The tendentious Greek character of the Persian king is also itself a product of cultural appropriation and transformation within the Greek tradition;²

¹ Among the substantial literature on this figure I have drawn especially on Hall 1989 and 1993, Tuplin 1996 and 2007, Georges 1994, Long 1986: 95–102, and Cartledge 1993.

² This has been the burden of the scholarship of Amélie Kuhrt and the Achaemenid History Workshop: see the seven volumes in the series *Achaemenid History*, esp. Sancisi-Weerdenburg and Kuhrt 1987 and Sancisi-Weerdenburg 1987. See too for deconstruction of the Greek stereotype Wiesehöfer 2007.

and this orientalising is of course not the only Greek way of looking at the Persian king – there are strands of Greek perception which are very far from hostile to Persian royalty, even within sources which also attest to the more luxury-loving stereotype (one thinks of Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* alongside his *Agesilaus*; or Herodotus' Cyrus alongside his Xerxes). Nevertheless the dissipated pleasure-seeker was one widely public way that the Greek sources represented the Persian king, and the comic or rabble-rousing usefulness of that representation must have relied on its ready currency as an established cliché.³ Identifying stereotyped items within this Greek delineation of the Persian king can provide indicators that some of the Persian kings we meet in Jewish writings belong to a topos rather than to naïve real-world reflection; by their participation in the same clichés, they draw on a common pool of popular ideas more than on the unmediated reality of the Persian court at first hand.

The uses of satire: the Eastern king in Jewish imagining

Conventionalised portraits of Eastern kings in and around the Hebrew Bible tend to inhabit those texts often called Jewish novels or novellas. The chief proponent of the category of Jewish novel is Lawrence Wills, whose 1995 monograph took Greek Daniel, Greek Esther, Judith, Tobit and *Joseph and Aseneth* as Jewish novels.⁴ As Wills's critics point out, these prose fictions are too generically diverse to call them a class of novels proper,⁵ but a set of shared characteristics makes it at least possible to point to a constellation of Second-Temple Jewish prose fiction writings with some commonly held novelistic tendencies, and Wills's group of texts is a useful starting point.

The pantomime character of the Oriental king appears throughout this class of texts. Commentators have identified Greek-style Eastern kings in a number of Jewish writings with novelistic features, including Esther, Daniel 1–6, Ezra,⁶ the Greek 4 Ezra,⁷ Song of Songs,⁸ and the *Letter of Aristeas*,⁹ we even meet the devil disguised as a Persian king in the *Testament of Job* (17:2). The Hebrew text of the book of Esther clearly registers this trope even before the Greek additions carry Esther in an altogether novelistic direction: at the opening of the book, in what Michael Fox has called the 'frilly burlesque' of the first chapter, we meet an autocratic Xerxes sunk in 'a world of crude but cheerful ostentation' suggestive of Greek

³ Evans 1991: 83.

⁴ Wills 1995: 2.

⁵ See Johnson 2004.

⁶ Gruen 2007: 61–2; Radday 1990: 295.

⁷ Gruen 2007: 64.

⁸ Dell 2005: 12.

⁹ Rajak 2007: 112.

parallels.¹⁰ Fox draws comparisons between the treatment of the Persian court in Esther and the same in Herodotus and occasionally Thucydides, and also, as part of the same literary tradition, the treatment of the Assyrians in the book of Judith. Granted that the Esther-tale quite likely has Persian folkloristic origins,¹¹ this literary treatment nevertheless bears the impression of the Greek image of the Persian court. Bickermann recognises its double heritage: 'We have here a typical tale of palace intrigue that could as well find a place in the Persian histories of Herodotus and Ctesias, or in the Arabian Nights.'¹²

For the book of Daniel, Bickerman called the Nebuchadnezzar of [Chapter 2](#) 'a standardised king of the Oriental popular stories . . . indistinguishable from Sennacherib in the story of Achiqar or Darius in the same Daniel cycle', or in fact the feasting Belshazzar.¹³ When we see Nebuchadnezzar overcome with rage (2:12, 3:13, 3:19), feared for his punishments (1:10), issuing peremptory orders (2:2), petulant threats (2:5) or lavish gifts (2:6), these are standards of the Greek character. Fits of rage are a typical feature of the literary oriental despot, and the characteristic vice of the Persian monarchs in Herodotus;¹⁴ this specific trope also seems to be known in Esther, where Tessa Rajak identifies it as the literary context for Ahasuerus' wrath against Vashti and Haman, and for Esther's fear of him which generates much of the narrative tension in the book (2:1, 4:11, 7:7). We might compare also the angry Cyrus in Greek Daniel 14:8, 21–2, or the description of a tyrant in the speech of the second page at the court of the Persian king in 1 Esdras 4:3–12; Tessa Rajak adds the further Jewish-Greek examples of Judith's Nebuchadnezzar (1:12, 5:2), Antiochus in 2 Maccabees (7:39) and 4 Maccabees (8:2ff), and Ptolemy Philopator in 3 Maccabees (1:9–12 and throughout)¹⁵ There is, then, a recognisable, repeatable stereotyped character of the oriental king in novelistic Jewish texts of the Second Temple period.

Scholarship on this type of Hellenistic Jewish text finds various ideological forces at work in the way these Eastern kings are used in them, and the court setting in the diaspora is often a way of negotiating Jewish self-understanding in the post-exilic period. The work of Erich Gruen and also that of John J. Collins has to different extents stressed the optimism

¹⁰ Fox 2001: 23; likewise Berlin 2001. ¹¹ Momigliano 1977: 26–7, and more recently Dalley 2007.

¹² Bickerman 1967: 181, 206.

¹³ Bickerman 1967: 97. See also Berlin 2001: 44 and Grabbe 2007: 233.

¹⁴ Seen in the sudden violence of his Darius (in the incident of Oeobazus' sons at 4.84, or that of Intaphrenes' family at 3.18) and Cambyeses.

¹⁵ Rajak 2007.

of the court stories and the self-confidence of the Jewish identity that is constructed in them:¹⁶ Gruen has discerned the comedy and playfulness in the portraits of pantomime kings like Esther's Ahasuerus or Daniel's Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar, and he shows that all this works in the service of refashioning the Jewish self-image at the expense of foreign rulers, as when, for example, in 4 Ezra the three clever pages at the court of the Persian king get away with describing him to his face in their speeches in the stock terms of abuse for the oriental tyrant, as a drunkard, a despot, and a piece of putty in the hands of his concubine; or the gullible Cyrus in *Bel and the Dragon* is shown up by wise Daniel. Collins draws out from the Near Eastern court tales a Jewish ethnic pride in the outsider who rises, and underlying this is a basically optimistic view of the world: the world is a place where foolish kings will eventually see their folly, as even Nebuchadnezzar does in Daniel or Ptolemy in 3 Maccabees, so there can be confidence in the ultimate benevolence of kings; and the world is a place where a high value is set on wisdom, as wise courtiers will succeed even at the court of an alien king. For these prose fictions, a motif which was for the Greeks a way of demonising the barbarian 'Other' becomes a mode of wry resistance to an occupying power, a means of surviving and thriving by wits and humour.

Self-satire: the Eastern king in Qohelet

A maverick cousin of the canonical 'Jewish novels' reveals a further flexibility in the ways in which prose fiction puts the Eastern king to work. The book of Qohelet (Ecclesiastes, in its Greek translation) is another of the late biblical sketches of a larger-than-life king who wears his fictionality on his sleeve; but if this text trades in the same cultural currency as the other biblical users of the Greek Eastern-king motif, it does so in the service of very different ideological ends. Of course, the book of Qohelet is not in any sense a novel, and no scholar includes Qohelet in this category – Wills in fact never mentions Qohelet in his treatment;¹⁷ but it is certainly prose fiction, with its wisdom material animated by a biographical structure.¹⁸ Some of the novella-style features of the other Jewish prose fictions do in fact find a particular echo in Qohelet, and especially in the narrative frame

¹⁶ Gruen 1998 and 2002; Collins 1998 and 2000.

¹⁷ Smith 1987: 121–2 is almost the only scholar to place Qohelet in a category together with these works, as 'essentially belletristic' and as such sharply distinguished from earlier Hebrew writings.

¹⁸ For narrativity as a guiding principle in Qohelet, see Christianson 1998; Fox 1999: 151.

of the book: a standard novelistic trick is deliberate historical anachronism, practised in Qohelet's royal title of a 'son of David, king of Israel in Jerusalem' who can nevertheless speak of many predecessors;¹⁹ and the setting in a far-distant time and legendary place, like Solomon's Jerusalem, is equally romance-like. The book's singular emphasis on the inner world of the narrator reflects the development which Wills called 'the twin techniques that are the stock-in-trade of novelists: internalising psychology and discursive description';²⁰ Qohelet's reflexive self-awareness and attention to the process and locus of thought and feeling are without parallel in the Hebrew Bible.²¹ The proper generic identification of Qohelet as a wisdom book anyway does not divide it absolutely from the novelistic tradition: Richard I. Pervo suggests that wisdom affiliations are a feature of ancient novels, putting Ahiqar alongside Tobit in an older Aramaic category of 'sapiential novels', the continuation of which he finds in *Aristeas* and perhaps in *Joseph and Aseneth*, with Apuleius, Longus and Chion of Heraclea for comparison.²²

The book of Qohelet is placed by most scholars in the third century BCE, and probably written in Jerusalem; it could perhaps be a century earlier but not much later, as the earliest fragments found at Qumran date to the mid-to-late second century.²³ While the most obvious presence behind the fictional speaker is Solomon, there are shades here of the whole history of the kings of Israel and Judah: this king is a composite, a sort of 'Everyking'. He is presented most fully in the 'royal boast' of the book's first narrative section (1:12–2:10 (*JPS*)):

I, Qohelet, was king in Jerusalem over Israel. I set my mind to study and to probe with wisdom all that happens under the sun. – An unhappy business, that, which God gave men to be concerned with! I observed all the happenings beneath the sun, and I found that all is futile and pursuit of wind: a twisted thing that cannot be made straight, a lack that cannot be made good.

I said to myself: 'Here I have grown richer and wiser than any that ruled before me over Jerusalem, and my mind has zealously absorbed wisdom and learning'. And so I set my mind to appraise wisdom and to appraise madness

¹⁹ See, e.g., Wills 1995: 3, 51 and Gruen 2002: 163 for the impossible figures 'Darius the Mede' in Daniel and 'Nebuchadnezzar the Assyrian' in Judith.

²⁰ Wills 1995: 9, 10. He also observes that Georg Lukács found the concentration on the interior life to be a hallmark of the novel.

²¹ Schoors 1996. ²² Pervo 1987: 106, 119.

²³ Krüger 2004: 19; for a (minority) Persian-period date, see Seow 1997: 11–29.

and folly, And I learned – that this too was pursuit of wind: for as wisdom grows, vexation grows; to increase learning is to increase heartache.

I said to myself: ‘Come, I will treat you to merriment. Taste mirth!’ That too, I found, was futile. Of revelry I said: ‘It’s mad!’ Of merriment: ‘What good is that?’ I ventured to tempt my flesh with wine, and to grasp folly, while letting my mind direct with wisdom, to the end that I might learn which of the two was better for men to practice in their few days of life under heaven. I multiplied my possessions. I built myself houses and I planted vineyards. I laid out gardens and groves, in which I planted every kind of fruit tree. I constructed pools of water, enough to irrigate a forest shooting up with trees. I bought male and female slaves, and I acquired stewards. I also acquired more cattle, both herds and flocks, than all who were before me in Jerusalem. I further amassed silver and gold and treasures of kings and provinces; and I got myself male and female singers, as well as the luxuries of commoners – coffers and coffers of them. Thus, I gained more wealth than anyone before me in Jerusalem. In addition, my wisdom remained with me: I withheld from my eyes nothing they asked for, and denied myself no enjoyment; rather, I got enjoyment out of all my wealth. And that was all I got out of my wealth.

The usual background given to this fictional autobiography is ancient Near Eastern, and we can certainly find wealth, wisdom, palaces, servants, gardens, waterworks and treasures abundantly in the annals of the Assyrian and neo-Babylonian kings, and in the small inscriptional record of the Achaemenids.²⁴ For others, Qohelet’s king more closely resembles one of the Ptolemies in Alexandria or their ersatz Transjordanian imitators the Tobiads, rendering a royal reality rather than a literary tradition.²⁵ These different settings need not cancel one another out and all probably reflect a genuine presence behind the text, however far in the background or transmuted through intervening cultures; but it may be more in keeping with the playfulness and second-order reflection of the book to read Qohelet’s king as more of a literary creature than a real one; the author perhaps writes under the influence of his age’s popular culture more than its inscriptional record. The widespread Greek stereotype of the foreign king, then, can be proposed as one further filter through which the idea of kingship has passed into this most Hellenised of biblical books.²⁶

²⁴ Seow 1997: 119–21, 124, 128–30, 144–52 and Seow 1995. For an Egyptian background, see Perdue 1994: 197–202 and Uehlinger 1997.

²⁵ Krüger 2004: 20, 65–6; Lohfink 1981; Braun 1973: 78–9, 162–3.

²⁶ Hengel 1974: I.115–16. There have been a number of studies devoted to disproving Greek influence on Qohelet (e.g. Burkes 1999), but more fundamental than particular proposals for items of literary dependence is the fact of widespread Hellenistic cultural presence which Hengel and others have

In general, the Persian kings of the Greek writers share with Qohelet's king the royal motifs of wealth, self-fashioning and an eye to present incomparability and future posterity – Herodotus' Darius 'desired to leave such a memorial of himself as no king had ever wrought' (4.166)²⁷ – but the comparison becomes most telling when at 2:1 Qohelet turns from the pursuit of wisdom to the pursuit of pleasure, under the luxurious summary rubric of 2:10, 'I withheld from my eyes nothing they asked for, and denied myself no enjoyment.' This is where the portrait of a king here seems to catch the reflection of those formulaic portraits in some of the Greek sources. Qohelet's self-aggrandising, accumulating, connoisseur king bears an immediate resemblance to a character like the splendid Xerxes of Herodotus, who adorns a plane-tree with gold, or to the Persian court of *Callirhoe*, which Philip Alexander and Loveday Alexander call 'Full-blooded Oriental splendour worthy of Cecil B. DeMille'.²⁸ I suggest several particular points of contact:

Wealth and works

The Persian king of the Greek writers is super-wealthy, as when Xenophon in the *Encomium for Agesilaus* praises the Spartan king by means of several sharply drawn contrasts with the generic figure of the Persian king; those contrasts illuminate Qohelet's king. Xenophon writes, 'It was the belief of the Persian king that by possessing himself of colossal wealth, he would put all things in subjection to himself. In this belief he tried to engross all the gold, all the silver and all the most costly things in the world' (8.6). We might compare Qohelet's gathering of silver, gold and the treasure of kings and provinces, and his possessions of herds and flocks: it is this wealth which makes him surpass all who were before him in Jerusalem (2:7 and 2:9). This is the kind of wealth which Quintus Curtius called 'a barbarian luxury of opulence' (3.3.13, referring to Xerxes); similarly, Herodotus' Darius made pure gold coinage (4.166; see also 3.130 for gold and 7.28–29 for wealth, or 9.82 for the luxury of Darius' camp) and even his Cyrus' programme is luxury as opposed to labour when persuading the Persians to follow him in revolting against the Medes (1.126). And like Qohelet's king who introduces

documented: see too Bickerman 1988, Grabbe 2008: 128. This environment means that the burden of proof is the other way round, and it would need to be shown that the author of Qohelet occupied a special separated sphere to avoid breathing any Greek atmosphere.

²⁷ Translations of classical texts are all from Loeb editions; I have occasionally updated archaic pronouns.

²⁸ P. Alexander and L. Alexander 2007: 102.

the catalogue of accomplishments in his royal boast with *higdalti ma* ‘*say*, literally ‘I made my works great’ (2:4), generating a refrain which echoes throughout the royal fiction as he worries about the future of these ‘works’ (*ma* ‘*sim*) after he is gone, the Eastern kings of Herodotus are characterised by their great works, their *erga*.²⁹

Gardens

One work in particular stands out here: Qohelet’s description of his gardens and parks is the most obvious gesture to a stereotypically Persian cultural archetype in the list. This seems to be deliberately done: *pardes* itself is a Persian loan-word, occurring only three times in the Hebrew Bible, and Momigliano suggested that Qohelet’s use of it here borrows the sense of the Greek *paradeisos* rather than the slightly wider meaning of the Persian word.³⁰ The writing here also has some particular emphases in common with the Greek writers’ style of fascination for the Persian kings’ gardens: Qohelet plants trees with every kind of fruit in 2:5, which is a detail shared with Xenophon, *Anab.* 1.4.10 and 2.4.14, where we read that the royal paradise of Belesys in Syria and one in Media have ‘all the products of the seasons’ and ‘all sorts of trees’; this recurring ‘every kind’ motif is the sort of shared stylistic feature which makes the relationship between Qohelet and the Greek sources seem more like a common fund of literary topoi than independent reporting of the same realia. And Qohelet’s gardens have cunningly constructed watering-pools for the trees built by the king, 2:6 (‘I constructed pools of water, enough to irrigate a forest shooting up with trees’); Pierre Briant notes that Persian gardens in the Greek sources are ‘groves artificially planted’, in the words of Quintus Curtius (7.2.22; cf. Xenophon, *Oecon.* 4.21).³¹

Collecting without moving

Another topos held in common is that of the king as the magnet at the centre of empire: the inbound direction of Qohelet’s repeated ‘I made *for myself*’ or ‘I gathered *for myself*’ is striking and not favourable in the

²⁹ Drews 1973: 54 calls Herodotus’ Babylonian history ‘above all a history of the great *erga* of her monarchs’.

³⁰ Momigliano 1975: 79. Bickerman 1967: 141 makes the same point, contrasting Qohelet’s Greek sense of the word (orchard) with the different sense (‘a royal or satrapal enclosed precinct’) which he finds in Nehemiah, Song of Songs and 1 Enoch.

³¹ Briant 2002: 201.

light of the public-service expectations for biblical kings. Qohelet's king is the spider sitting in the middle of the web, collecting without moving, in contrast to the raptor-like Assyrian kings who cross boundaries and scale mountains to seize tribute. Briant calls the Greeks' Persian king 'the gigantic magnet drawing the manpower and products of the conquered peoples toward the center' in 'the centripetal traffic of the products of the Empire', citing *Cyropaedia* 8.6.6, 23, where Cyrus describes the satraps' obligation 'to send back here what there is good and desirable in their several provinces', and the duty of 'those of every nation' to 'send to Cyrus the most valuable productions of their country, whether the fruits of the earth, or animals bred there, or manufactures of their own arts'.³² With Qohelet's centralising collection of silver, gold and treasures from the provinces we might compare the enthusiastic description by Theopompus of the Great King's accumulation of gifts from subject peoples of silver, gold, treasures, money and animals;³³ Xenophon contrasts the simpler and easily satisfied tastes of Agesilaus with the Persian king, 'constrained to draw from the ends of the world the material for his enjoyment, if he would live without discomfort' (9.4).

The court

Another motif shared with Xenophon is the over-staffed court: the Persian king in that contrast requires an army of vintners, cooks and lackeys (*Aeg.* 9.3; cf. *Cyr.* 8.1.9; 8.20, *Anab.* 4.4.21), and we can find similar lists in Herodotus (9.82; 7.186–7) and Quintus Curtius (3.3.25). We might compare Qohelet's retinue of male and female slaves and slaves born in the house, male singers and female singers in 2:7 and 2:8, and we find the tradition of singing women at the Persian court passed on by Athenaeus (2.48f; 4.145c) and in Ctesias' 150 female harpists who sing throughout dinner (12.530d). It is hard to know what is meant by Qohelet's 'luxuries' alongside his singers in 2:8 (literally, 'delights of the sons of men'); but whether these delights are culinary or sexual, the general impression of luxury at court is clear, and easy to parallel in the Greek sources. Qohelet's experiments in cheering his body with wine – literally, 'I explored how to drug my flesh with wine' in 2:3 – strike a chord with the motif of the heavy-drinking Persian king seen in Herodotus' Cambyses (3.34), Ctesias's Xerxes II (*Persica* 45) and Plutarch's Cyrus the Younger and Artaxerxes (*Art.* 6.1).³⁴

³² Briant 2002: 200–1, 193. ³³ Known from a quotation (*FGrH* 115 F263a).

³⁴ Briant 2002: 253, 292. On the Persian court, see also Wiesehöfer, this volume.

The pacific king

Those kinds of Persian kings also, like Qohelet's king, never fight. In his strange peaceableness, this king is unlike the stereotypical ancient Near Eastern ruler boasting of his martial prowess: in its formal likeness to the first-person inscriptions of Assyrian kings, this royal boast presents a striking silence where we expect a list of peoples subdued and cities razed, and the same difference separates this from the martial self-presentation of the Hellenistic kings.³⁵ While this may in the first instance reflect Solomon the 'man of peace', it also resonates with the note of suspected cowardice heard in the Greeks' descriptions of the Persian kings – certainly some are mighty warriors, like Herodotus' Cyrus, but the plan of his panic-stricken Xerxes to flee from the battle of Salamis (8. 97, 103) plays on the ideas of oriental effeminacy which come to fullest expression in the spurious final chapter of Xenophon's *Cyropaedia*.³⁶ Briant finds here that 'The judgment of the Classical authors is obviously shaped by a Greek polemical current that resulted in a presentation of the barbarians in general and the Great Kings in particular as weak and worthless men.' He shows how 'the Greeks highlight the reluctance of the kings to place themselves at the head of their armies, such as Artaxerxes III in Diodorus: "He, himself unwarlike, remained inactive . . . Though regarded with contempt by the Egyptians, he was compelled to be patient because of his own inertia and peace-loving nature"' (citing 16.40.4–5).³⁷ And again, this topos has a literary rather than a real existence: the Persian kings were conquerors and did present themselves in martial terms, as their own inscriptions attest.³⁸

Carpe diem

Diodorus also provides an interesting parallel with the book of Qohelet for similar philosophical themes found in a context of royal narrative: his Sardanapalus, last king of the Assyrians and wrecker of the empire, who 'outdid all his predecessors in luxury and sluggishness' (2.23.1) is given a funeral epitaph which bears close comparison with the thought of Qohelet at a number of points, and with Qohelet's rhetorical stance too, since it is addressed to the king's royal successors (2.23.3):

Knowing full well that you were mortal born, lift up your heart, take your delight in feasts; when dead no more pleasure is yours. Thus I, who once

³⁵ Préaux 1978: 198. ³⁶ See Sancisi-Weerdenburg and Kuhrt 1987: 117–31.

³⁷ Briant 2002: 227.

³⁸ See, for instance, the Behistun inscription and Naqš-e Rostam A and B inscriptions of Darius, and the Persepolis H inscription of Xerxes.

ruled over mighty Ninus, am nothing but dust. Yet these are mine which gave me joy in life – the food I ate, my wantonness, and love's delights. But all those other things men call felicities are left behind.

Here the fleeting joys of life – food, pleasure and love – are those of the enjoyment sayings in Qohelet, where the shortness of the time to enjoy them is likewise accentuated (2:24; 5:18; 8:15; 9:7–9); in Qohelet too it is death which puts an end to such pleasures (3:22; 9:10), similarly returning man to dust (3:20; 12:7), and there too profit is left behind (2:18–21; 5:13–16; 6:2). Thus in his particular strain of melancholy as well as his particular style of luxury, the Persian king of the Greek stereotype bears comparison with King Qohelet.³⁹

What is singular about the book of Qohelet in its context is the uses to which this book puts that common literary currency. Other Hebrew prose fiction co-opted the Eastern-king topos to prick oppressors' bubbles and to showcase the urbane survival skills of Jews at foreign courts. The effect of the Eastern king tradition in the book of Qohelet, however, is almost a mirror image, a complete reverse of those emphases: instead of an optimistic view of the world and a positive construction of Jewish identity, we have instead pessimism and a deeply critical look at national tradition. The great difference is that the king in Qohelet is a king of Israel, and the setting is not the diaspora but Jerusalem. We could say that all the 'othering' goes in the opposite direction: everything critical and satirical which is elsewhere implied about a foreign king by the use of this motif is here being foisted onto a king over all Israel in Jerusalem who at the least represents Israel's greatest king and probably has something of every Israelite and Judean king in him. Instead of refashioning the Jewish self-image at the expense of foreign rulers as his biblical contemporaries do, Qohelet is using the same motif for a pessimistic refashioning of the Jewish self-image at the expense of the nation's own past rulers.

We see elements of internal criticism creep into the use of the king motif elsewhere in the Jewish prose fictions: for Gruen reading Judith, the Assyrians are lampooned with the Eastern-king stereotypes when Nebuchadnezzar has a 120-day banquet, or Holofernes an elaborate Persian tent, but they are foils for the sharper shafts aimed at the feeble and incompetent Israelite leadership. Thus humour in Hellenistic Jewish historical fiction, in Gruen's words, both 'cuts foreign princes and generals down to size and holds Jewish follies up to scorn', though this is still a mark of

³⁹ Cf. too Hengel's comparison of Phylarchus' Ptolemy II with Qohelet's Solomon for the same combination of 'towering hubris and pessimistic despair', Hengel 1974: I.130.

self-confidence in the varied and versatile intellectual circles of Hellenistic Judaism.⁴⁰ Philip Alexander and Loveday Alexander see the process going a step further in 3 Maccabees: they say that the stereotype of the oriental monarch gave the Jews a stick with which to beat their own rulers – that is, Hasmonean or Herodian rulers – if they were behaving in an unacceptably absolutist and arbitrary way, and they call this a tradition of political protest that continues the prophetic criticism of the luxurious courts of Solomon and some of his successors.⁴¹

Perhaps we could propose for Qohelet an analogous use of the same stereotype, for his different ideological stance: in distinction from the contemporary political engagement of the author of 3 Maccabees, Qohelet too is using the stereotype of the oriental monarch as a stick to beat the nation's own rulers, but those of the past rather than of the present: his critical questioning is directed against the kings of Israel's history, and he poses that searching question by painting the king of Israel in Jerusalem as an oriental despot. Qohelet too is continuing the prophetic criticism of the luxurious courts of Solomon and his successors, but in his case without the shift to a contemporary target: his prophetic ire is still reserved for Solomon and his successors. The particular resource this author draws on is Greek, but it has become a part of the literary vocabulary of Hellenised Palestinian Judaism, where its critical function is exploited in the service of Jewish distinctiveness. So Qohelet takes his place among the specifically Jewish fictions of his time; but his satirical intentions are very different to those we find in the more patriotic Esther, Daniel, Ezra and 3 Maccabees. In Qohelet's hands their polemical tool does more radically critical work: rather shockingly, he is making Solomon another Nebuchadnezzar or another Xerxes. In a work so dark and philosophically pessimistic as Qohelet's, the orientalising in his royal fiction is not turned into comedy by a farcical plot or by a great escape and a national holiday at the end; his remains a satire of protest.

By repeatedly repurposing a borrowed motif, then, Jewish prose fiction is able to turn its hand not only to resistance to empire, but also to internal historical soul-searching. Hellenistic Jewish authors could use this medium and its motifs to move freely within the literary culture of their day without defining themselves solely by opposition; rather than being trapped within fiction-as-resistance, Qohelet is able to self-scrutinise and to probe the question of what royal follies could have reduced the kingdom of David and Solomon to a tiny province of the Ptolemies. Qohelet's difference from

⁴⁰ Gruen 2002: 180–1.

⁴¹ P. Alexander and L. Alexander 2007: 101.

the writers of those other Jewish royal fictions is that he is more antiquarian, more steeped in biblical tradition; he apportions the blame for the nation's subjection internally and historically rather than laying it at the door of the ruling Persians or Greeks or even present native authorities. In this, his thought belongs within the penitential stream of post-exilic expression, represented by Nehemiah 9 ('Our kings . . . have not kept your law', v. 34) and Daniel 9 ('Open shame falls upon us, our kings . . .', v. 8), though without its piety; this writer, then, for all his changes in mindset, is in his view of history a distant heir of the deuteronomic school, showing what it is to get that 'king like the other nations' for whom the forefathers pleaded. The politics of the author of Qohelet are the same as those of one Saadiah Ben Joseph, author of an eighteenth-century Yemenite folkloric text which retells a well-known story from the popular medieval collection of Hebrew wisdom and fables, the *Stories of Ben Sira*:⁴² in this tale the Queen of Sheba, insulted by Solomon, becomes pregnant as a result of her visit, and gives birth (four hundred years notwithstanding) to none other than Nebuchadnezzar. Saadiah's comment on this outworking of retributive justice is to apply Isaiah 49:17, 'Those who laid you waste go away from you' – or literally, go *out* from you, as Nebuchadnezzar goes out from the loins of Solomon to lay waste to Solomon's kingdom; thus the troubles of Jerusalem are ultimately laid at the door of Solomon, for his folly. In Qohelet, the Greek-style satirical portrait of the Solomonic king is the first note of a critical voice in the book which will protest at individual and national troubles, and at the follies of the kings who brought them about.

⁴² As told in Lassner 1995.

CHAPTER 13

Lost in translation *The Phoenician Journal of Dictys of Crete*

Karen Ní Mheallaigh

‘Gentlemen, I will now show you this text. Forgive me for using a photocopy. It’s not distrust. I don’t want to subject the original to further wear.’

‘But Ingolf’s copy wasn’t the original,’ I said. ‘The parchment was the original.’

‘Casaubon, when originals no longer exist, the last copy is the original.’
Umberto Eco, *Foucault’s Pendulum*¹

The text rediscovered – and lost

In 66 CE, an earthquake ruptures an ancient tomb on Crete. Passing shepherds glimpse inside the ruins a metal box and prise it out, hoping it will contain treasure. Inside the chest they find a text made of linden-wood, written in letters which neither the shepherds nor their master are able to read. The text is brought to Rutilius Rufus, the Roman governor, who is suspicious of the arcane script and hastily dispatches it to the Emperor Nero at Rome, for fear it may contain secret or subversive information. Nero identifies the writing as Phoenician, and the text is finally translated into Greek. What illiterate shepherds had found in the ruins of the tomb that day was the journal of a Greek soldier, Dictys of Crete, over one thousand years old. Its nine volumes contain the true story of the Trojan war, as it was recorded by an eye-witness; the *Journal* therefore challenges the more fanciful account of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, poems which had been composed centuries after the event. The Greek translation of Dictys’ journal is lodged in the Greek library in Rome under the name of its author, where it could become known to all the world. Fragments survive from this Greek ‘translation’, dated to the second century.² Some time later, probably in

¹ Eco 2001: 131.

² The most recent discoveries, *P.Oxy.* 4943 and 4944, were published in Hatzilambrou 2009 and Hatzilambrou and Obbink 2009. The handwriting of *P.Oxy.* 4943, the earliest of the fragments, has

the fourth century, this Greek text was compressed into the six books of the Latin version familiar to us now. But of the original copy of Dictys' *Journal*, that precious Ur-text of Phoenician letters on tablets of antique linden wood, there remains not a trace.

Of course, it is surely the case that this Ur-text never actually existed beyond the pages of the Greek and Latin journal, and that we should not expect to recover fragments of Dictys' wooden tablets any more than we should expect to find the cypress-wood tablets containing Deinias the Arcadian's account of *The incredible things beyond Thule*, or the medieval Latin manuscript of Adso of Melk. At the end of this essay, I shall return to this question, to ask if ancient readers were any more or less likely than we are to have believed in the existence of the Phoenician text. But the question of the text's actual existence does not negate the significance of its *imagined* existence in the ancient reader's mind.

This paper explores the role played by Dictys' fictional Phoenician text in the imaginative encounter with the pre-Homeric past which Dictys offered his imperial readers. I shall argue that the *Journal's* claims to Phoenician writing play a central role in the text's bid for authenticity, as well as its competitive game of one-upmanship with Homer; but it also undermines and ironises these very claims to authenticity. The Phoenician genealogy therefore generates a resolute indeterminacy about the *Journal's* truth-status, and embroils the reader in tangled questions about whether the *Journal* is a genuine artefact or an artful fake. In its subversion of its own pre-Homeric literary fantasy, the Phoenician *Journal* encapsulates the playful and paradoxical nature of the relationship between imperial literature and its past.

The Phoenician *Journal* as pseudo-document

From Dictys' journal in its Phoenician letters to Eco's Italian and old French translation of a medieval Latin manuscript in *The Name of the Rose*, authors frequently claim that the putatively authentic texts underlying their fictions were written in obscure or ancient languages and arcane scripts.³ This is a multi-purpose ruse, which functions as an authenticating strategy both by

been dated to the second century, possibly the first half (Hatzilambrou 2009 20: 83); the other three fragments (P.Tebt. II 268, *P. Oxy.* xxxi 2539, and *P. Oxy.* 4944) belong to the late second or early third century. The date of the Latin text is uncertain; Merkle (1989: 263–91) argues persuasively for the fourth century, although a third-century date is also possible.

³ On ancient pseudo-documentary fiction, see Hansen 2003; Ní Mheallaigh 2008. For a survey of such claims about origins in 'foreign' languages or scripts as a characteristic of ancient literary forgeries, see Speyer 1971: 70–1.

fleshing out the image of the text in the reader's mind and simultaneously converting the author's persona from that of a conjurer of fictions into an antiquarian scholar and purveyor of inaccessible information. At the same time, fictions of translation enhance the mystique and *recherché* allure of the text,⁴ whilst insulating the author against criticisms about anachronisms or inconcinnities of style (the fault lies ostensibly not with the 'translation' in such cases, but with the awkward, primitive or obscure original).⁵

In Dictys' case, the fiction of the Phoenician text also supports the fiction of anteriority to the Homeric epics which enables the *Journal* to challenge (however playfully) the authority of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. The authority of the Homeric poems was rooted in their extreme antiquity; it was widely believed that these were the earliest examples of literature written in Greek. Yet it was also widely believed that the poet Homer post-dated the Trojan war by intervals that varied between twenty-four and 400 years,⁶ which created problems for the authority of Homer's account. Out of this temporal vacuum arose several putatively ancient texts which usurped the cultural authority of the Homeric epics by claiming anteriority to them, and therefore closer proximity to the Trojan War itself. In the imperial period there was a vogue for such pseudo-documentary fictions, including the extant Dictys' *Journal of the Trojan War*, Dares' *History of the Fall of Troy*, Dio's *Trojan Oration*, as well as other works which do not survive, such as the *Trojan History* of the poet Corinnus of Ilion.⁷

Dio's eleventh oration *Troicus* directly challenges the authority of Homer's *Iliad* with a narrative about the war based allegedly on the eye-witness account of Menelaus himself. In a startling revision, it is now the Trojans who defeat the Greeks, and Homer is reduced to a mendicant storyteller who fabricated the story about the Greek victory to gratify his paying Greek audience. In one devastating stroke, the Trojan war legend which is at the foundation of the entire Greek literary tradition is therefore exposed as a beggar's lie; the true account, Dio tells us, was recorded

⁴ Hansen (2003: 307) views the strategy as a part of the 'exotic and romantic pedigree' which the fiction constructs for the pseudo-text.

⁵ See Paschoud 1995: 263; Cameron 2004: 126–7.

⁶ Although the *Vita Plutarchea* (1.95–6 Allen) states that 'some people' claimed Homer was a contemporary and eye-witness of the Trojan war, it was more widely believed that the poet belonged to a later period. Herodotus (2.53) placed Homer 400 years after the Trojan war, but was aware that an earlier dating was more usual; the Alexandrian scholar Aristarchus dated the poet 140 years after the Trojan war (*Vita Plutarchea* 2.17–20 Allen); in Philostratus, *Heroicus* 43.7, the vine-dresser explores a variety of possible intervals: Homer lived 24, 127 or 160 years after the war. For discussion of attempts to date Homer in antiquity, see Graziosi 2002: 90–124.

⁷ See Merkle 1989: 16–21 and 45–50.

by Egyptian scribes from the Greek hero Menelaus during his sojourn in Egypt after the war. This record was preserved in inscriptions in a temple near Onouphis in Egypt, although there are few now who can read the badly eroded text (*Or.* II.37–8).⁸

In his radical rewriting of the Trojan war, Dio playfully scuppers Homer's authority, supplanting the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* with the putatively more authentic, anterior account of an eye-witness. By 'upping the ante' on Homer in this way, Dio reconfigures the genealogy of Greek literature, exploiting his actual posteriority to the epics in order to conjure a fictively anterior version which then recasts the original poem, its source, as a secondary and less reliable distortion of its own 'authentic' record. The fiction about the obscure ancient Egyptian inscription conveniently explains this version's long absence from the Greek literary record and why Greek audiences have never heard this version of the Trojan war until now. It is a plausible fantasy of the form a pre-Homeric text would take, which exploits Egypt's status in the Greek *imaginaire* as the repository of obscure knowledge and a historical record of far greater antiquity to that of the Greeks, as well as Egyptian writing's status as the ancient ancestor of the Greek alphabet itself.⁹ Dio's playful pseudo-documentary fiction is built, therefore, upon deep beliefs about Greek culture's indebtedness to more ancient civilisations in the Mediterranean, especially Egypt.

In order to authorise his revisionist narrative, Dictys' text, like Dio's, lays claim to a fictive anteriority to the Homeric poems: the fictional Dictys is also an eye-witness to the events he describes, giving him greater reliability than Homer. Supporting this claim to anteriority is the allegation that the original authorial copy of Dictys' journal was written, not in Greek letters, but in Phoenician.¹⁰

Like Dio's lapidary Egyptian text, the wooden tablets and Phoenician writing of Dictys' *Journal* convey an appropriate air of antiquity for the imaginary pre-Homeric text. It was generally believed that papyrus had not been invented as a writing-material in Homer's time: according to the elder Pliny, who bases his authority on Varro, papyrus was not discovered until Alexander the Great founded Alexandria in Egypt; prior to that,

⁸ See Kindstrand 1973: 141–62; Kim 2010: 85–139.

⁹ For Egypt as a repository for ancient learning and culture, as well as the recording of tradition, see Herodotus 2.4 and Plato, *Timaeus* 21d ff.; for Egypt as the origin of writing, see the myth of Theuth in Plato, *Phaedrus* 274c5–275b2. The Milesian philosophers, Hecataeus, Anaximander and Dionysius, speculated that Danaus had imported writing into Greece before Cadmus, presumably from Egypt; Antikleides of Athens attributed the invention of writing to the Egyptians: see *FGrHist* 1F20 and S. West 1985: 294, with notes.

¹⁰ *Prol.* II. 7–8.

materials such as palm leaves and the bark of certain trees were used.¹¹ In a similar way, the Phoenician script removes the potentially anachronistic phenomenon of the Greek alphabet at a time when it was widely considered not to exist in the form that was familiar to Classical authors: it was widely believed that the Homeric poems were the earliest examples of Greek literacy; texts that were thought to pre-date the poems were written in different languages or obscure forms of proto-Greek writing, such as Herodotus' 'Cadmean letters'.¹² Pseudo-documentary fictions exploited two predominant theories about the origins of Greek literacy in antiquity. According to the revolutionary theory, the Greek alphabet was invented by a cultural pioneer such as the Greek hero Palamedes during the course of the Trojan war itself.¹³ The ancient Trojan poet Corinnus of Ilion supposedly wrote an account of the Trojan war using 'the Doric letters invented by Palamedes'.¹⁴ According to the evolutionary theory, however, the Greek alphabet developed slowly out of an older script such as Phoenician or Egyptian.¹⁵ It is this theory which the Dictys-author invokes in the prologue with the assertion that Dictys used 'the Phoenician letters which Cadmus brought to mainland Greece'. Evidently, inventors of pre-Homeric pseudo-texts thought carefully about their script, language and physical materiality, to meet the exacting expectations of bibliophile readers attuned to the criteria of *Echtheitskritik*.¹⁶

The Phoenician *Journal* as time-capsule – or fake?

Dictys' Phoenician text, preserved perfectly in its author's tomb for over a millennium, represented an ancient version of the time-capsule, and

¹¹ Pliny, *NH* 13.69. At *NH* 13.88–9 Pliny asserts that Homeric heroes must have used wooden tablets for writing, as Homer never mentions papyrus, only wooden writing-tablets (*Iliad* 6.168–9). For this reason Pliny discredits the claims of Mucianus, governor of Lycia, to have read a letter from the Trojan hero Sarpedon which was written on papyrus.

¹² Hdt. 5.59–61, with S. West 1985, esp. 290–4. For the view that the Homeric poems were the earliest certain examples of Greek writing, see Josephus, *Ap.* 1.10–12.

¹³ Stesichorus and Euripides proclaimed Palamedes to be the inventor of writing (*FGrHist* 1F20 and Eur. fr. 578; see also Gorgias, *Pal.* 30).

¹⁴ For Korinnos of Ilion, see *Suda* 3, p. 158, No. 2091 Adler; Merkle (1989: 17), with further references.

¹⁵ The fifth-century philosopher Critias claimed that the Phoenicians 'discovered word-preserving writing' (DK88 B 2.10) and Herodotus argued that the Greeks had appropriated and adapted the alphabet of the Phoenicians who immigrated to the Greek mainland with Cadmus some generations before the Trojan war (5.59–61). That this idea endured into the imperial period is shown by Adrian of Tyre's quip, when he took the Chair of Rhetoric at Athens in the third century, that 'Letters had come to the Athenians *once again* from Phoenicia' (Philostratus, *VS* 587). For a range of ancient theories, see the scholion on Dionysius Thrax, p. 183.

¹⁶ On *Echtheitskritik* in Graeco-Roman antiquity, see Speyer 1971: 112–28.

appealed to a readership hungry for fantasies of direct contact with the remote past.¹⁷ It did so not only by presenting itself as the account of an eye-witness of the ancient events, but also in terms of the *Journal's* textual 'purity'. In this latter sense as well, the imaginary text vastly surpassed the Homeric poems, whose textual authenticity was a matter of notorious dispute. The first systematic attempts to collate and edit the texts of the Homeric poems had begun in the Hellenistic period. That this generated a groundswell of anxiety is clear from anecdotal evidence, such as the story about the philosopher Timon of Phlius who enjoined his pupils to seek out *uncorrected* copies of the epics, as these were more reliable.¹⁸ In a similarly provocative gesture, when Lucian interviews Homer on the Island of the Blessed in *True Stories*, the poet defiantly asserts ownership over all of the verses which his Alexandrian editors had obelised.¹⁹ What this evidence suggests, however playfully, is that the intervention of Homeric editors was, in some quarters and probably impressionistically, felt to obfuscate the author's original text, rather than elucidate it.

In contrast, Dictys' Phoenician text is (so the fiction claims) launched directly from the era of the Trojan war into the imperial era in its pristine original condition. It had survived, supposedly, from an even more remote antiquity than the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* and because, unlike the poems, it had remained concealed inside its author's tomb throughout this time, it had been uncontaminated by the centuries of oral and written transmission which had confused the Homeric texts. Dictys' Phoenician *Journal* therefore offers a fantasy of unmediated textual access to the ancient literary past which must have held a particular allure for readers of the imperial period who were only too aware of the dense layers of time and transmission that separated them from Homer's 'original' poems, as well as from the even more remote events which these poems narrate. 'Dictys' represented a new and even more authentic 'Homer' for a belated culture acutely conscious of its mediated relationship with its literary past.

It would be misleading, however, to present the *Journal* as a naïve or inert by-product of imperial culture's nostalgic yearnings. Rather, the text playfully interrogates and deconstructs its own fantasies of authenticity, anteriority and unmediatedness, and teases the reader with the futility of the desire for such a pristine text, even as it generates that desire. An accumulation of ambivalent details in the *Fundbericht* hint at an ironic

¹⁷ See Zeitlin 2001, esp. 207–18. The emphasis on physiognomical descriptions of the heroes is central to this fantasy (e.g. Philostratus, *Heroicus* 26.13; 33.39–41; 40.6; 48.1–4 etc.; Dares, *Hist.* 12–13); see Whitmarsh 2009.

¹⁸ Diogenes Laertius 9.113. ¹⁹ *VH* 2.20; see Nesselrath 2002; Ní Mheallaigh 2009.

reading of its fiction. Nero, for example, is a deliciously subversive choice to authorise this text: on the one hand, his Philhellenism and well-known zeal for relics and literature associated with the Trojan saga made him the ideal point of reception for Dictys' *Journal*.²⁰ But on the other hand, Nero's notorious credulity creates doubt about the authenticity of the text: this would not be the first time the emperor had been duped by a 'rediscovered' Phoenician treasure. In 65 CE – just the year before the *Journal's* serendipitous discovery – Nero was conned by Caesellius Bassus, a man of Punic origins who claimed he had discovered the treasure of Queen Dido in a cave on his lands in North Africa, and convinced Nero to send a ship across the Mediterranean to retrieve it. When the treasure did not materialise, Bassus discreetly killed himself, but by then the story had become a *cause célèbre* throughout Rome.²¹ Is Dictys' *Journal* another Trojan-saga hoax, like the treasure of Dido? The text's avowedly Phoenician origins bring it into closer orbit with Phoenician Dido and the Punic Bassus, as well as evoking the treachery for which the Phoenicians in general were famous both in the Homeric poems and the Roman cultural *imaginaire* – dangerous associations which are in fact implicit in the *Journal's Fundbericht* when the governor of Crete reacts with alarm to the Phoenician script.²² The manner of the *Journal's* delivery, in the hands of the Cretan Eupraxides, could also sound alarms in the reader's mind: perhaps Nero should have remembered his *Aeneid* and exercised greater circumspection about this gift-bearing Greek with his suspiciously eloquent name (Mr 'Good-Deed'), particularly given that he was a Cretan, and that Cretans were notorious liars.²³ How much faith, after all, would an ancient reader have put in this miraculously rediscovered, pre-Homeric, Cretophoenician text, authorised by a credulous, treasure-hungry emperor like Nero? The *Fundbericht* is not a straightforward story to authenticate the text; on the contrary, the accumulation of jarring notes insinuates that the *Journal* – the ultimate 'authentic' text of Graeco-Roman literature – is, in reality, the ultimate fake.

Paradoxically, the dense layers of the *Fundbericht* also undermine its claim to produce a pristine text, as the complex narrative actually obfuscates and removes the Ur-text beyond retrieval. Not only does it fudge the precise identity of its original language, leaving it unclear whether Dictys wrote

²⁰ The Trojan war is a dominant theme in Neronian literature, see Merkle 1989: 244 with n. 4.

²¹ Tacitus, *Annals* 16.1–3; Suetonius, *Nero* 31–2; see Merkle 1989: 244–5. For an interpretation of Nero's role in the Bassus fiasco, see Braund 1983.

²² *Od.* 14.288–90, 15.415–16 and 419; see Briquel-Chattonet 1992; Winter 1995.

²³ Ní Mheallaigh 2008: 409.

in the Phoenician language itself, or merely using Phoenician script,²⁴ but more worryingly Dictys' Ur-text appears to vanish from record the moment of its translation into Greek. It is this Greek 'translation' – not the Phoenician 'original' – which receives the place of honour and its author's name in the library at Rome. The Latin translation then alters this Greek text further still: in the prefatory letter, the translator-and-editor 'Septimius' admits to compressing the final three books of the Greek *Journal* into just one book of his Latin translation, thereby changing Dictys' original configuration of nine books to six. In physical terms, too, the very presence of the prologue at the front of the text obstructs and defers the reader's access even to its Greek or Latin translation, mediating his or her encounter with these later versions of Dictys' original *Journal* through a labyrinthine account of the very processes of textual transmission which the fiction of the time-capsule sought to evade. Paradoxically, this most 'pristine' of texts is so heavily mediated at the hands of its decipherers, multiple translators and editors that it not only differs radically from Dictys' original text in language, scope, structure, and materiality – but the Phoenician original is itself entirely displaced by its copies: it has vanished from existence.

This tale of a rediscovered text therefore starts by *inventing* a lost text for readers to yearn for, and then hinting that the loss is specious. By doing so, the prologue creates the ideal reader for the *Journal*, but it also exposes how our bibliophile desires can abet the creation of texts – even those that (we may suspect) don't exist: the Phoenician Ur-text exists in our minds, because putative 'copies' of it exist. The ironic strategies of the prologue convert Dictys' *Journal* from a forgery into a fiction which invites readers to collude with its pseudo-documentary ruse.

Dictys' neo-Cretan tale: from Homer to hyper-reality

The *Journal*, therefore, is a complex species of lie, which hopes to entrap some of its readers, but also hints at its own deception in the hope that others will recognise and appreciate its arch fraudulence; it is a collusive lie, which ultimately demonstrates the skill of the liar. Dictys' Cretan identity is crucial in this regard. The text's Cretan provenance is emphasised both in the prologue as well as in the *Journal* itself (e.g., *Eph.* 5.17); even Dictys' very name evokes his native island, as Mount Dikte was one of Crete's most prominent topographical features in antiquity (in Latin the

²⁴ For the ambiguity about the language of Dictys' putative original (whether it was Phoenician, or else Greek written using Phoenician script), see Merkle 1989: 109–13; Hatzilambrou and Obbink 2009: 89–90.

toponymical adjective *Dictaeus* was a synonym for *Cretensis* ‘Cretan’, especially in poetry).²⁵ Not only does this exacerbate the reader’s doubts about his text’s claims to truth and authenticity, as I have already suggested (as Cretans are liars), but it also effectively converts the *Journal* itself into a Cretan tale, triggering an intertextual dialogue with the ‘Cretan tales’ in Homer’s *Odyssey*, the foundational ‘open’ lies of Greek literature.

There are obvious affinities between Dictys’ *Journal* and Odysseus’ Cretan tales, which arguably constitute the first examples of proto-pseudo-documentary fiction in Greek literature. Although they contain no references to rediscovered texts (naturally), the Cretan tales of the *Odyssey* are nevertheless marked by other features which are typical of pseudo-documentary fiction, such as accumulation of detail to achieve the ‘reality effect’ and the familiar intermingling of known facts with fabricated ones in order to disorientate the interlocutor and build a persuasive fiction. The intense welter of names, places and other circumstantial details (for example, facts about garments and jewellery at *Od.* 19.225–48) is instrumental in lending Odysseus’ stories their necessary verisimilitude (‘lies resembling the truth’). Moreover, the tales’ tantalising proximity to the poem’s master-narrative blurs the distinction between ‘truth’ and ‘lies’ in a way that must have provoked the audience to question which narrative was the more authentic – especially as there are compelling reasons to attach greater credence to the realistic ‘lies’ of the Cretan tales which are, in many ways, more plausible than the fabulous version of events offered elsewhere in the poem.

The *Journal*’s intertextual relationship also exploits the sense of posteriority that is already in-built in Homeric poems themselves. In the prologue to the *Journal*, Dictys is affiliated with Idomeneus, son of Deucalion, and Meriones, son of Molus, who order him to write the text. The genealogy of these two characters in the *Iliad* links the world of the poem to a more ancient past: Deucalion is a grandson of Zeus through Minos (*Il.* 13.448–54), and Meriones is the owner of the boar-tusk helmet, an icon of a distant past which he inherited from his father Molus who himself acquired it through various hands from the house of Phoenix’s father, Amyntor (*Il.* 10.261–70). Idomeneus and Meriones in the *Iliad* both evoke the presence of a more remote heroic past and even, possibly, a more ancient poetic tradition of Minoan epic,²⁶ making them fitting sponsors

²⁵ Champlin 1981: 205. On the name Dictys, see also Merkle 1989: 16 n. 11.

²⁶ See M. L. West (1988: 159): ‘We seem to have here a pair of genuine Minoans from the heyday of Knossos.’ See also Latacz 2004: 259–67, esp. 261–3; Reece 1994: 166, n. 12.

of the *Journal*, which is itself an avowed literary fossil from the era before the Homeric poems.

More pointedly, Dictys of Crete gives a voice to the substratum of anterior Cretan narrative that is contained within the *Odyssey*.²⁷ It is possible to reconstruct, from the stratigraphy of the *Odyssey*, an alternative 'Cretan' tradition of Odysseus' adventures which was superseded by the Homeric version. The dominant Homeric version playfully alludes to this Cretan tradition but also suppresses it, most conspicuously in Odysseus' tantalising 'Cretan tales'.²⁸ Flaunting its own posteriority, the *Odyssey* trumps its 'sources' – variant versions of the story of its hero's return – by inveigling them into the fabric of its own narrative in the discredited form of 'lies that are like the truth'. Dictys, in turn, exploits the Cretan tales from the *Odyssey* to authenticate his own pre-Homeric narrative. He claims, for example, to have learned about Menelaus' post-war adventures when the hero visited Crete (*Eph.* 6.4), capitalising on references in the Homeric poems to Menelaus' travels in the Mediterranean and his friendship with Idomeneus.²⁹ Dictys also claims to have learned about Odysseus' *nostos* when Odysseus visited Idomeneus on Crete (*Eph.* 6.5), linking directly to Eumaeus' report in the *Odyssey* of a story he heard from an Aetolian man who claimed he had seen Odysseus with Idomeneus and the Cretans repairing their storm-damaged ships.³⁰ In a slippery and ambivalent move, Dictys capitalises on the ambiguous lies of the *Odyssey* to authenticate his own version of the Trojan war saga which aggressively asserts its superior veracity to that of the Homeric poems.

The intertextuality with the Cretan tales of the *Odyssey* intensifies the indeterminacy of the *Journal*'s truth-status. Dictys' pseudo-documentary 'Cretan tale' can lay claim to the status of 'lies that resemble the truth', but this intertextuality also lays bare the fictionality of the *Journal*'s self-presentation. The disguised narrator of the *Odyssey*'s Cretan tales, for example, hints eloquently at the disavowal of authorship and apocryphal disguise

²⁷ Reece (1994: 168–9) also suggests that the emphasis on Crete in Dictys' *Journal* could be derived from 'an ancient version of the tale . . . that Homer himself knew and whose traces he never entirely eradicated in his own *Odyssey*'. However, he does not explore the ramifications of the intertextuality further.

²⁸ *Od.* 13.256–86; *Od.* 14.199–359; *Od.* 19.164–202. Zenodotus' reading of *Od.* 1.83 and 285–6 (Κρήτην instead of Σπάρτην) suggests that he knew a variant version of Telemachus' travels, which took him to Crete instead of Sparta; see Allen 1924: 149; Danek 1998: 47–9; Reece 1994.

²⁹ For Menelaus' friendship with Idomeneus, see *Il.* 3.230–3. At *Od.* 3.276–312, Nestor reports that half of Menelaus' fleet (not, however, including Menelaus himself) was shipwrecked on Crete. Ptolemy Chennus reports that Menelaus visited Crete after the Trojan war (Photius, *Bibl. cod.* 190,150b36–8).

³⁰ *Od.* 14.378–85. On the role of Crete in the *Eph.*, see Merkle 1989: 71–2.

in Dictys' *Journal*. Read through the lens of the *Odyssey*'s Cretan tales, 'Dictys' appears as much a disguise as Odysseus' Cretan alter-egos, although it remains a mystery who the 'real' identity underneath this authorial mask may be.

This tendentious intertextual relationship with the *Odyssey* functions in the opposite direction, too: read through the lens of Dictys' *Journal*, the hierarchy between truth and lies within the *Odyssey* itself is dramatically inverted. Within the economy of the poem, Odysseus' Cretan tales are framed as 'lies'. But as a 'Cretan tale' which defiantly asserts its superior truth-value to the Homeric poems, Dictys' *Journal* inverts this equation, so that the 'Cretan tale' becomes the repository of truth and authority, and the Homeric account is reduced to a more fanciful derivative fiction instead. The *Journal* competes with its source in other respects, too. Whereas the original Cretan tales were contained within the *Odyssey*, Dictys' neo-Cretan tale comprises both the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* and more besides, for example tales from the Epic Cycle. The *Journal* contests the cultural supremacy of the Homeric poems by offering a fiction that is ostensibly *more* authentic and *more original* than the original Homeric poems, as well as offering quantitatively *more* information than both the poems together. It is a hyperreal, mimetic text which competes to be 'better than the real thing'. At the same time, by colluding with the reader about its own fictionality, not only through the incongruous notes in the *Fundbericht*, but through the intertextual irony with the *Odyssey* as well, it stimulates the reader to appreciate the skill with which its hyperreal fantasy of authenticity has been contrived. As with all extravaganzas of hyperreality, the participant's pleasure is in fact *enhanced* by this awareness: pseudo-documentary fiction does not seek to anaesthetise the reader to its mimeticism but, rather, it actively invites the reader to take pleasure in its ability to create illusions which are so nearly perfect that they threaten to eclipse the reality which they imitate.³¹ As a result we as readers 'not only enjoy a perfect imitation, we also enjoy the conviction that imitation has reached its apex and afterwards reality will always be inferior to it'.³² In Dictys' case, there is a particular *frisson* of pleasure at the prospect of holding in one's hands a copy of the Homeric story which is even *more* original and authentic

³¹ In his essay 'Travels in Hyperreality', Eco comments on the pleasure of the *transparent* artifice of mimetic worlds such as Disneyland: '... Disneyland is more hyperrealistic than the wax museum, precisely because the latter still tries to make us believe that what we are seeing reproduces reality absolutely, whereas Disneyland makes it clear that within its magic enclosure it is fantasy that is absolutely reproduced' (Eco 1986: 43).

³² Eco 1986: 46.

than the original poems themselves. As Eco points out, this pleasure in the copy is contingent upon the reader's desire for the original; in Dictys' text, this is stimulated by the polemical comparison with the Homeric poems at the end of the prologue, where it is asserted that Dictys' *Journal* contains the truer story of the Trojan war. The Phoenician Ur-text plays an equally important role by recreating this vital readerly scenario: the poignant desire for an original which is 'lost', which can only be recovered through copies.³³

Dictys' *Journal* is therefore a complex and provocative reception-text, which externalises the crisis of posteriority that is already built into the *Odyssey* especially, and addresses it to the similar crisis of belatedness that is so richly germane to imperial literary culture. The playful internal tentatiousness between the *Odyssey* and its own embedded Cretan tales – the recurrent sense which the poem gives of coming second even in relation to its own story, of already being a reception of the *nostos* of Odysseus, and just one version among many – becomes, through Dictys' *Journal*, an expression of imperial culture's ambivalent relationship with Homer. Through its challenge to the authority of the Homeric poems, the *Journal* converts the internal truth/lies polemic of the *Odyssey* into an assertion of the value of mimetic literature in relation to its origin-texts. This 'newly discovered' fake and mimetic Cretan tale refuses to be overshadowed by Homer, but threatens to overshadow its great parent-texts instead. In doing so, the *Journal's* fiction of authenticity contests the Platonic aesthetic of the purity and superiority of the origin and, by playfully creating new, obviously fake and unattainable origins it champions instead a new aesthetic of posteriority: the copy, the fake and the hyperreal. Dictys' Phoenician *Journal*, a phantom-text conjured into existence only to be lost in translation, is an icon for the creative energies of imperial culture which found liberation and expression in the playful creation of authentic fakes, of original copies.

Reading the Phoenician *Journal* – a 'straightforward fantasy'?

It is difficult to gauge how much literal credence an ancient reader would have ascribed to pseudo-texts like Dictys' Phoenician *Journal*, or to its phantom analogues such as Dio's Egyptian inscription in the *Trojan Oration*, or the original text of Deinias the Arcadian – a text, incidentally, with

³³ See Eco's comments on the hyperreal fantasies offered by the copies of great works of European art in the Palace of Living Arts in Los Angeles: 'The Palace's philosophy is not, "We are giving you the reproduction so that you will want the original," but rather, "We are giving you the reproduction so you will no longer feel any need for the original." But for the reproduction to be desired, the original has to be idolized . . . ' (Eco 1986: 19).

a similar Phoenician genealogy – which supposedly underlies *The incredible things beyond Thule* of Antonius Diogenes.³⁴ Pseudo-documentary fictions deliberately problematise the issue of belief and, like many such fictions, this text would have appealed to different levels of reader: from the astonished reader who detects no irony and believes it is all real, to the reader who relishes the thrill of the prospect of rediscovering Dictys' text, without *really* believing it is true (or pondering that question too deeply), to the one who savours not just the illusion which the text offers, but the exquisite artistry of the illusion of authenticity itself. Depending on the reader, the *Journal* transforms mercurially from tale of a rediscovered text, to pseudo-documentary fiction, to hyperreal fake.

In different ways, Dictys' *Journal* stages and replays the bibliophile desires of its readers, and it also mocks those desires: the non-existence of Dictys' Phoenician Ur-text is, ultimately, its *raison d'être*. The Ur-text also gives the *Journal* a genealogy which both authenticates and exposes the futility of this quest for a long-lost text, colluding that it, too, is a fake, and that we will never find Dictys' Phoenician text, only its 'original copies', its Greek and Latin surrogates. It is a further, wicked irony that that Greek version itself happens to be, for modern readers, a fragmentary, partially lost text. This blurs the line between the real and fictional textual transmission in a way that intensifies the *Journal*'s troubling indeterminacy still further. (Fiction sometimes appears to pre-empt reality in this way, or else reality appears to mimic fiction; the two are not always easily distinguishable, and pseudo-documentary fiction exploits this ambiguity).³⁵ One way or another, the Phoenician Ur-text is the central prop in this dynamic readerly drama.

As Cameron argues, it probably did not occur to most ancient readers to check or verify source-references – a circumstance which created ample opportunity for bogus citations.³⁶ In Cameron's view, this meant that ancient readers would have treated Dictys' Phoenician *Journal* as a 'straightforward fantasy'.³⁷ But it is hardly as simple as that: there are important differences between source-references and pseudo-documentary fictions, though both are a type of citation.

³⁴ Antonius Diogenes claims that Deinias dictated his story to the Athenian scribe Erasimides *in Tyre*, Phoenicia, with the help of the Phoenician princess Derkyllis.

³⁵ Some pseudo-documentary fictions exploit this type of situation, for example Eco's novel *The Name of the Rose*, which is presented as a pseudo-documentary fiction (based on the testimony of Adso of Melk), and which features at the heart of its plot a text which is in reality a lost/fragmentary text (the second book of Aristotle's *Poetics*). In an interesting essay, Obbink (2011) explores similarities between such fictions and the real work of textual reconstruction.

³⁶ Cameron 2004: 124–63. ³⁷ Cameron 2004: 147.

The contract of citation is an implicit understanding between author and reader which holds that, whenever a text is cited, its existence is accepted as a matter of fact, unless there are compelling reasons for doubt. Like all contracts, this could be abused in order to instantiate in the reader's mind texts that in fact had no existence outside the citing text at all – imaginary texts. How sure you were about the ontological status of a cited text depended on how encyclopaedic your readerly knowledge was; Ptolemy Chennus' *Novel History*, which is full of citations whose truth-status is still a matter of dispute, is an extreme demonstration of the sort of textual game which tested – which indeed still tests – its anxious readers' knowledge of the parameters of the universal library in this way.³⁸ Pseudo-documentary fictions similarly exploit the contract of citation; however, because of the unique emphasis they place on the authenticity, circumstances of discovery and the material reality of the documents they claim to cite, the pressure on the reader to believe is far greater. The elaborate pseudo-documentary fiction of Dictys' prologue conjures an extraordinarily vivid and realistic image of the text as a material artefact, even to the extent of giving it its own adventures and *Nachleben*. Detailed fictions like this create an imaginary text that is not only difficult to *disbelieve*, but is already, in fact, partially real, given that it exists in the form of translations of its putative 'original'. This is very different from a simple source-reference which proffers no more than the author's name and the title of his work. The point of pseudo-documentary fictions is to persuade the reader into belief in the text's existence by stimulating him or her to imagine it as a real object in all its tangible detail. As a result, the inaccessibility of the fictive text is all the more exquisitely felt.

It may indeed be a naïve reader who seeks this Ur-text in earnest, as the hunt will usually only lead to copies and translations – ghosts of the text that supposedly once was.³⁹ The joke, therefore, is on the reader who succumbs too literally to the fiction's persuasive allure. But this is a joke designed to entrap the most learned readers as well as the most gullible, and there is, ultimately, a slim difference between the naïve dupe of the fiction, and the erudite reader or expert to whose antiquarian expertise and curiosity the fiction appeals. That is the thrill of the literary hoax, where the

³⁸ Cameron 2004: 134–59.

³⁹ Such misreadings are a relatively common phenomenon in the case of modern pseudo-documentary fiction: Umberto Eco reports that, in the wake of the publication of *The Name of the Rose*, he received numerous earnest queries regarding Adso's manuscript from readers who missed the intertextual irony in his preface (Eco 2006: 218).

test is to see how far you can resist the fiction's gravitational pull. Far from mere 'straightforward fantasies' which could be readily dismissed, these imaginary texts played a vivid, complex – and profoundly disquieting – role in their authors' artful scholarly games, as well as in their readers' imaginative recreation of the past.

Milesiae Punicae

How Punic was Apuleius?

Stephen Harrison

Introduction

As far as can be established, Apuleius was born in Madauros, a Roman *colonia* a few days' journey south-west of Carthage,¹ in the province of Africa Proconsularis (modern M'daurouch in Algeria), in the mid 120s CE, and, apart from visits to Rome, Athens and some other Mediterranean cities of Greek culture, spent most of his career in Carthage and Roman North Africa, where he is last firmly located in the mid 160s CE.² In the region of his birth, the vernacular language was Punic,³ and he seems well suited to be cast as a multicultural figure bridging the Punic, Roman and Greek worlds.⁴ However, any Punic colour of Apuleius as a writer is hard to find. His works do show clear evidence of the interpenetration of Greek and Roman material,⁵ not least in his prose fiction *Metamorphoses*, based on a lost Greek original; but, unlike the forensic speech *Apologia*, and the epideictic orations *Florida* which are framed within the civic world of second-century Carthage, the *Metamorphoses* expressly avoids the mention of any Punic or North African cultural environment in its plot until the famously enigmatic *Madaurenses* at its end (11.27)⁶ where Lucius the intradiegetic narrator appears to be identified with Apuleius the extradiegetic narrator;⁷ even here what is evoked is the Roman name of the Roman *colonia* of the author's birth, rather than any consciously Punic element. As we shall see, the novel's style likewise shows little North African colour: though there is clear evidence for African pronunciation of Latin and some local usages and vocabulary, some at least influenced by Punic, none of this seems to

¹ Here and elsewhere I estimate a Roman day's journey over land at 25–35 UK miles (Madauros is some 100 miles from Carthage): for the figure, see Casson 1994: 184–5.

² For a summary of the evidence, see Harrison 2000: 1–10. ³ See e.g. Millar 1968.

⁴ For Apuleius as a complex cultural figure, see now Graverini 2007.

⁵ For Apuleian Hellenism, see the extensive evidence of Sandy 1997 and Harrison 2000.

⁶ For the topography of the *Metamorphoses*, more literary than realistic, see Harrison 2002.

⁷ For summary discussion and bibliography on this famous topic, see Harrison 2000: 228–32.

touch the *Metamorphoses*, and the old idea that Apuleius' archaic, rhetorical and euphonious style in the *Metamorphoses* is 'African' can be rejected in favour of seeing it as 'Asian' and consistent with second-century practice as a whole.⁸

Milesiae Punicae: external evidence

There is some evidence for the characterisation of the *Metamorphoses* as 'Punic' in antiquity. In the *Historia Augusta* (composed at the end of the fourth century CE) we find an attack by Septimius Severus in a letter to the Senate on the character of Clodius Albinus, his rival for the purple in 195–7 CE (*SHA Clod. Alb.* 12.12):

Maiores fuit dolor, quod illum pro litterato laudandum plerique duxistis, cum ille neniis quibusdam anilibus occupatus inter Milesias Punicas Apulei sui et ludicra litteraria consenesceret.

It is a greater pain to me that many of you have deemed him to deserve praise as a man of literature, when he was busied with some nonsense or other fit for old women and was growing senile amongst the Punic Milesian tales of his friend Apuleius and such literary trivialities.

Clodius was born in Hadrumetum, not too far south of Carthage, in Africa Proconsularis, the same province as Apuleius, who is therefore *suus*, his connection. Though Severus himself was born in Lepcis Magna, a good way east of Carthage but still part of the same Roman province, this supposed letter to the Senate in Rome clearly casts Albinus as an outsider unworthy of the supreme power, since it presents him as a mere African provincial whose claim to Roman aristocratic ancestry is a false one (*SHA* 12.8). *Punicas* here is clearly more than a geographical descriptor and is plainly uncomplimentary: from a Roman perspective it indicates cultural inferiority and peripheral subordination. It may also point to the African Apuleius' adaptation into Latin of the Greek tradition of the Milesian Tales, though here he was following the much earlier lead of Sisenna.⁹ All this passage proves is that in a negative rhetorical

⁸ There was much interesting discussion of this and related topics at the excellent conference on 'Apuleius and Africa' at Oberlin, Ohio in May 2010 (for the ongoing conference website, see <http://sites.google.com/site/apuleiusandafrika/HOME>, accessed 15.12.2010; a volume is expected), but I am still unconvinced of any fundamental African or Punic literary or linguistic colour in Apuleius' work, as I hope this piece will show.

⁹ For the *Metamorphoses* and the Milesian Tales, see Lefèvre 1997 and Harrison 1998a with earlier bibliography; for Sisenna's work, see Aragosti 2000.

context 'Punic' could mean 'culturally inferior'; it does not represent a measured critical judgement of the *Metamorphoses*, or indicate anything except that the author of the *Historia Augusta* knew that Apuleius came from a Punic-speaking region of North Africa which could be denigrated for its provincialism.

The evidence of the novel: the absence of Punic culture

The programmatic opening of the novel, a rich paragraph which has famously been the subject of twenty-four different essays in a collective volume,¹⁰ is a good place to start in our search for Punic colour in the *Metamorphoses*.¹¹

At ego tibi sermone isto Milesio uarias fabulas conseram, auresque tuas beniuolas lepidio susurro permulceam, modo si papyrus Aegyptiam argutia Nilotici calami inscriptam non spreueris inspicere. Figuras fortunasque hominum in alias imagines conuersas et in se rursum mutuo nexu refectas, ut mireris, exordior. Quis ille? Paucis accipe. Hymettos Attica et Isthmos Ephyrea et Taenaros Spartiatica, glebae felices aeternum libris felicioribus conditae, mea uetus prosapia est. Ibi linguam Atthidem primis pueritiae stipendiis merui; mox in urbe Latia aduena studiorum Quiritium indigenam sermonem aerumnabili labore, nullo magistro praeunte, aggressus excolui. En ecce praefamur ueniam, si quid exotici ac forensis sermonis rudis locutor offendero. Iam haec equidem ipsa uocis immutatio desultoriae scientiae stilo quem accessimus respondet: fabulam Graecanicam incipimus. Lector intende: laetaberis.

But let me join together different stories in that Milesian style, and let me soothe your kindly ears with an agreeable whispering, if only you do not scorn to glance at an Egyptian papyrus inscribed with the sharpness of a reed from the Nile. I begin a tale of men's shapes and fortunes transformed into different appearances and back again into themselves by mutual connection, that you may wonder at it. 'Who is this?' Hear in brief. Attic Hymettus and the Corinthian Isthmus and Spartan Taenarus are my origin of old, ever fertile regions recorded in even more fertile books. There it was that I acquired the Attic tongue in the first campaigns of boyhood; thereafter in the Latin city as a foreigner to the studies of Rome I took on and developed the local language with laborious effort and without the lead of a master. Look then, I ask your pardon at the beginning, if I commit any offence, being an inexperienced speaker of the language of the forum which is foreign to me. Indeed, this very change of language corresponds to the style of switch-back

¹⁰ Kahane and Laird 2001.

¹¹ Text and translation are those of Harrison and Winterbottom 2001.

lore (?) which I have approached (?): I begin a story of Greek origin. Reader, pay attention: you will be pleased.

The speaker of the prologue (whether Apuleius, Lucius or the book itself)¹² gives an emblematic list of places with which cultural association is claimed, but apart from Egypt (a play on the physical origin of the papyrus roll, I would argue, as well as an allusion to the novel's Isiac climax), the locations are all Greek; there is nothing here about Carthage, Roman North Africa or Punic colour. The phrase *si quid exotici ac forensis sermonis rudis locutor offendero* has sometimes been taken as apologising for African origin, but it is of course spoken by a speaker who is presented as ultra-Greek and a new learner of the Latin language. More generally, if the novel were presented to us with no authorial information we might not locate its author as a native of North Africa. Of course, Apuleius inherits the general geography of the Greek ass-tale, set on the Greek mainland, though he can modify details, for example the location of the ending in Corinthian Cenchreae not Thessalonica as in the *Onos*; but no attempt is made to bring Lucius to North Africa, though he does go to Rome. Likewise, the two male gods who have most prominence in Apuleius' writings for North African audiences in the *Florida* and *Apologia*, Hercules/Melqart (*Flor.* 22.3; cf. *Apol.* 22) and Aesculapius/Eshmun (*Flor.* 18.39; cf. *Apol.* 55), do not appear in the *Metamorphoses*;¹³ the goddesses of the main plot of the novel, Venus, Ceres and Juno, do all have potential syncretic matches in Punic religion (Astarte, Tanit, Asherah), as did Isis (Astarte), but Punic identities are not included in the great catalogue of goddesses at *Met.* 11.5, even though it concludes with African Ethiopians and Egyptians:

Inde primigenii Phryges Pessinuntiam deum matrem, hinc autochthones Attici Cecropeiam Mineruam, illinc fluctuantes Cyprii Paphiam Venerem, Cretes sagittiferi Dictynnam Dianam, Siculi trilingues Stygiam Proserpinam, Eleusini uetusti Actaeam Cererem, Iunonem alii, Bellonam alii, Hecatam isti, Rhamnusiā illi, et qui nascentis dei Solis inchoantibus inlustrantur radiis Aethiopes utrique priscaque doctrina pollentes Aegyptii caerimoniis me propriis percolentes appellant uero nomine reginam Isidem.

Thence the first-born Phrygians call her the Mother of the Gods of Pessinus, hence the autochthonous Athenians call her the Minerva of Cecrops, from this the floating Cyprians call her the Venus of Paphos, the arrow-bearing Cretans Dictynna Diana, the trilingual Sicilians Proserpina of the Styx, the

¹² I retain the view of Harrison 1990 that the prologue is spoken by the personified book; for discussion and other views, see Kahane and Laird 2001.

¹³ For these syncretisms and cults, see Harrison 2000: 60 and 6 n. 23.

ancient Eleusinians Attic Ceres, some Juno, some Bellona, these Hecate, those Rhamnusia, and the two kinds of Ethiopians who are illumined by the initial rays of the sun-god as he rises and the Egyptians, powerful in ancient rites, celebrating me with my own ceremonies, call me by my true name of Queen Isis.

This is a prime opportunity to add the Punic syncretism of Isis/Astarte to a long and geographically diverse list, but the chance is self-consciously avoided.

At both its beginning and end, as well as in its firm plot-location in the world of Greece and Italy, Apuleius' novel fails to emphasise any Punic or Roman North African associations. The shock of the apparent identification of Lucius-narrator with Apuleius-author in the use of the adjective *Madaurensem* (11.27) is thus all the greater at its end, but this should be seen as an isolated and ironic trace of the author's provincial origins rather than a cultural reorientation of the novel.

Punic and Punic culture in the *Apologia* and *Florida*

The *Apologia*, the speech in self-defence delivered by Apuleius at Sabathra in 157–8 CE, gives some indications of Apuleius' public approach, before an elite audience including the proconsul, to Punic culture and the Punic language which was almost certainly his own vernacular. Apuleius' disloyal stepson Pudens is ridiculed as ignorant for having little Greek and no Latin and speaking only Punic (*Apol.* 98):

loquitur nunquam nisi Punice et si quid adhuc a matre graecissat; enim Latine loqui neque uult neque potest.

He never speaks anything but Punic, or perhaps one or two words of Greek which come from his mother. Speaking Latin is beyond both his wish and his grasp.¹⁴

The evident shame of this matches the supposed embarrassment of Septimius Severus over his sister from Lepcis Magna who could barely speak Latin but was presumably fluent in the local language of Punic (*SHA Severus* 15.7). This allusion to Punic is the only mention of the language in all Apuleius' works.

This relative suppression of Punic and Punic culture is consolidated in the autobiographical section of the *Apologia* (24–5). Here Apuleius is concerned to portray himself as linked not with the earlier Punic culture

¹⁴ Tr. Hunink in Harrison et al. 2001.

of Carthage and Hannibal but rather with the Berber culture of Numidia and Masinissa, who began the Second Punic War as a Carthaginian general but ended it as an ally of Rome (*Apol.* 24):

De patria mea uero, quod eam sitam Numidia et Gaetuliae in ipso confinio mei<s> scriptis ostendistis, quibus memet professus sum, cum Lolliano Auito c. u. praesente publice dissererem, Seminumidam et Semigaetulum, non uideo quid mihi sit in ea re pudendum, haud minus quam Cyro maiori, quod genere mixto fuit Semimedus ac Semipersa . . . nec hoc eo dixi, quo me patriae meae paeniteret, etsi adhuc Syfacis oppidum essemus. quo tamen uicto ad Masinissam regem munere populi Romani concessimus.

Then there was the issue of my native town. It is situated on the boundary between Numidia and Gaetulia, as you showed from my own writings: in a public speech delivered in the presence of the illustrious Lollianus Auitus, I proclaimed myself to be ‘half Numidian’ and ‘half Gaetulian’. Now I cannot see what I should be ashamed of, any more than Cyrus the Great because he was of mixed birth, being half Mede and half Persian . . . I have not said this out of regret for the identity of my native town, even if we were still the city of Syphax! Actually, after his defeat we were kindly allowed by the Roman people to join king Masinissa.¹⁵

Here Apuleius is proud to proclaim the past of his city of Madauros, but is equally careful not to suggest that it has any Punic ethnicity: the two kings mentioned, Syphax and Masinissa, are both Numidian rather than Carthaginian, and the point is that Madauros has looked towards Rome for more than three centuries.

In the *Florida*, the selections from Apuleius’ epideictic speeches at Carthage in the 160s CE, there is likewise very little indication of Punic language or cultural affinity. Though (as in the *Apologia*) gods of important Punic syncretism like Hercules/Melqart and Aesculapius/Eshmun are given some prominence,¹⁶ these are acknowledgements of contemporary and local cultic practice rather than any kind of allusion to Punic culture, and the attention of Apuleius and his audience is on the cosmopolitan and Rome-facing culture of Carthage and the presence of the proconsul.

Thus even in works directed to an audience in Carthage itself, Apuleius is remarkably reticent about non-Roman Carthaginian history and Punic culture or language. The great name of Hannibal is found in his works only in a list of Roman historical examples in the *De Deo Socratis* (7), a lecture on the ‘god’ of Socrates probably contemporary with the *Florida*

¹⁵ Tr. Hunink in Harrison et al. 2001.

¹⁶ See n. 13 above.

and for the same Carthaginian audience,¹⁷ and the only allusion to Punic suggests a metropolitan-style scorn for an inferior subaltern language. We can only conclude that Apuleius is interested in representing himself as an international Greco-Roman intellectual of cosmopolitan character, and in virtually suppressing the local cultural aspects of his African birthplace and Punic vernacular.

Apuleius and African Latin

Both the nineteenth-century idea of a distinctive African style of writing and its specific application to the high style of Apuleius have now been generally discredited. Though there have been occasional revivals of the idea in limited form,¹⁸ the most authoritative recent statement shows that there is clear evidence from inscriptions and grammarians that some elements of pronunciation, orthography and even morphology are especially prevalent in Roman North Africa, but denies that this local colour extended to the written language and argues that such elements may be colloquial survivals from the archaic vulgar Latin of earlier Roman settlers.¹⁹ Most recently, the leading source on Latin linguistic variation in the Roman Empire has provided some interesting evidence which needs to be taken into account, but which essentially confirms this picture.²⁰

It is evident that there was a recognisable African accent in Latin:²¹ in *Silvae* 4.5, addressed to a Septimius Severus born in Lepcis Magna who is clearly an earlier relative of the emperor,²² Statius denies that this Septimius is perceptibly a provincial in either speech or dress (45: *non sermo Poenus, non habitus tibi*, 'your talk is not Punic, nor your clothing'), while the emperor Septimius himself is said to have had an African accent which lasted into old age (*SHA Severus* 19.9 *Afrum quiddam usque ad senectutem sonans*). This dialect seems to have involved particular elements of pronunciation such as shortened vowels and the sound of 'l':²³ such elements are not detectable in Apuleius' written texts; neither is the use of vocative for nominative found in some inscriptions influenced by Punic.

There seems little doubt that some writers of Latin from Africa used loan-words from African languages, especially in terms referring to medicine and the landscape; such usages seem to have been more common in rural areas distant from cities and in writers of relatively poor education,

¹⁷ For orientation on this work see Harrison 2000: 136–73.

¹⁸ E.g. Lancel 1985.

¹⁹ Petersmann 1998.

²⁰ Cf. Adams 2003 and 2007.

²¹ Cf. Adams 2003: 436–7.

²² Coleman 1988: 169.

²³ Adams 2003: 512–15.

and to represent innovations rather than archaisms.²⁴ Nothing like this is visible in the sophisticated and urbane Apuleius. And there were clearly local by-forms, such as diminutives: Adams suggests only one candidate for this category, *rupina* (from *rupes*), used three times and found only in Apuleius.²⁵ As Adams notes, this looks like a diminutive suffix such as found in some other African coinages, but its usage in Apuleius' novel (*Met.* 6.26, 7.13) is not quite that of a diminutive; it is rather a limited collective use of *rupes*, meaning 'rocky patch', and in this sense it might well be an archaism from Apuleius' reading rather than local colloquial usage – we might compare Cato's *porrina* ('leek-patch', *Agr.* 47.1) and *rapina* ('turnip-patch', *Agr.* 5.8). This archaic colour seems to be confirmed by the linguistic context of the third occurrence of the word in Apuleius, at *Florida* 1.11: *patitur enim, quod qui herediolum sterilem et agrum scruposum meras rupinas et senticeta miseri colunt: quoniam nullus in tesquis suis fructus est nec ullam illic aliam frugem uident*, 'For he has the same experience as those who unhappily farm their sterile plots and stony fields, consisting only of rocks and thorn-trees. Since there are no crops in their wild wastelands, and since they see in it no other growth...'.²⁶ Here *rupina* nestles amongst rare archaisms drawn from a reading of early Latin authors (for *scruposus* see Plautus *Capt.* 185, for *senticetum* Plautus *Capt.* 860, for *tesquum* (*tescum*) Accius fr. 228 Dangel), a strong indication that it belongs to the same linguistic register.

Such archaic colour in Apuleius is, I would suggest, not oral survival from earlier settler times (as with some words in US English)²⁷ but a general feature of second-century CE Latin style as a whole, as fully documented in the work of Marache and effectively applied to Apuleius by Callebat.²⁸ Likewise, the exuberantly musical and euphonious style used by Apuleius in heightened contexts is not 'African' but rather the climax of the 'Asian' tendency in prose style known since the Hellenistic period, as helpfully formulated by Tatum.²⁹ Any local Punic colour through Punicising uses in Latin therefore seems difficult to find in the style of Apuleius, exotic though it often sounds.

Postcolonial Apuleius – does the ass write back?

Scholars have occasionally been interested in whether Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* presents a subaltern African/Punic voice resisting Roman

²⁴ Adams 2007: 516–76.

²⁵ Adams 2007: 535.

²⁶ Tr. Hilton in Harrison et al. 2001.

²⁷ See Montgomery 2001: 105–9.

²⁸ Marache 1952, Callebat 1968.

²⁹ Tatum 1979: 135–59.

power;³⁰ this is hard to reconcile with the evidence of the novel, and it is difficult to disagree with the well-argued case of Dowden that the *Metamorphoses* aims ideologically at a Roman readership, or at a readership that looks to Rome with approval as the mother country.³¹ Here I gather and comment briefly on a few key passages from the *Metamorphoses* which support Dowden's more general case for its Roman orientation.

Met. 2.19 (Byrrhaena welcomes Lucius to Hypata):

Certe libertas otiosa, et negotioso quidem aduenae Romana frequentia, modesto uero hospiti quies uillatica: omni denique prouinciae uoluptarii secessus sumus.

Certainly we have a leisured freedom, and for the visitor here on business we have a Roman-style density of people, and for the retiring guest the kind of rest you find in a country house: we are the place of pleased retirement for the whole province.

Byrrhaena's exaggerated advertisement of the versatile attractions of her city amusingly makes the witch-capital of Greece into an ideal tourist destination, but it is clear that the city of Rome is a key point of comparison: Hypata, she improbably asserts, matches the empire's capital as a dense population centre, though it was not even the capital of its province of Thessaly (that was Larissa). This appeals to the expected ideal of Rome as the great, teeming city for both Lucius and the reader, as well as expressing a provincial desire to imitate the metropolis.

Met. 6.8 (Mercury's worldwide proclamation):

Si quis a fuga retrahere uel occultam demonstrare poterit fugitiuam regis filiam, Veneris ancillam, nomine Psychen, conueniat retro metas Murtias Mercurium praedicatorem, accepturus indiciae nomine ab ipsa Venere septem sauia suaui et unum blandientis adpulsu linguae longe mellitum.

If anyone can return from flight or show the hiding-place of a runaway princess, the handmaid of Venus, named Psyche, let him meet Mercury the herald behind the Metae Murciae, to receive for his evidence from Venus herself seven sweet kisses, plus one deeply honeyed with a thrust from her caressing tongue.

Here we have a famous allusion to the topography of the city of Rome: the Metae Murciae were the turning-posts of the Circus Maximus, near the

³⁰ See the useful discussion of Finkelpearl 2009: 7–9, though her article, like the important work of Graverini 2007, is more subtle in seeing Apuleius as showing some cross-cultural self-consciousness as a Romanised African.

³¹ Dowden 1994.

temple of Venus Murtea, wittily used by Apuleius both as an appropriate location for an assignation with the goddess and as a haunt of prostitutes.³² The hearer in the audience and the reader are here expected to know its identity, and Rome is seen as the great city where the gods are at least sometimes to be found; the suggestion of the cultural centrality and prestige of the metropolis is clear.

Met. 11.17 (an Isiac official reads at the goddess' festival):

de sublimi suggestu de libro de litteris fausta uota praefatus principi magno senatuique et equiti totoque Romano populo, nauticis nauibusque quae sub imperio mundi nostratis reguntur.

From a lofty platform he first pronounced from a written text in a book propitious prayers to the great emperor and the senate and the knights and all the Roman people, and for the seafarers and ships under the rule of our world.

At Corinthian Cenchreae the provincials of Achaea, even in the un-Roman cult of Isis, are seen as anxious to proclaim their loyalty to all elements of the Roman people, carefully listed in a catalogue which begins with a compliment to the emperor, and the phrase *mundi nostratis*, 'our world', like the familiar *mare nostrum*, 'our sea',³³ seems to express a Roman feeling of Mediterranean empire which is expected to appeal positively to the work's readership.

The novel, then, shows no signs of post-colonial resistance in the form of promoting a subaltern Punic or African identity, but rather emphasises approving membership of the larger Roman world, whether by integrative reference to the metropolis of Rome itself or by careful characterisation of the people of two different Greek cities in different Roman provinces as loyal subjects of the empire. We are for the most part presented with a harmonious Greco-Roman world which looks to the Eternal City as its ideological centre.³⁴ Even the cult of Isis/Osiris is located in the *Metamorphoses* not in Egypt, but first of all at the port of Corinth, one of the great Greek cities of the Roman Empire, and then on the Campus Martius itself; thus it is safely 'contained' and 'domesticated' by prestigious Greco-Roman locations. The *Metamorphoses* is conscious of the difference between core

³² Zimmerman et al. 2004: 417.

³³ Caesar *Gall.* 5.1.2, Sallust *Jug.* 17.4, Mela 1.7, Pliny *Nat.* 6.142, Tacitus *Agr.* 24.2.

³⁴ It is true that the episode of the soldier who corruptly commandeers Lucius' ass in Books 9–10 does not reflect especially well on the Roman army and its treatment of Greek provincials, but this is a story of comic realism rather than provincial resistance: see Millar 1981: 66–9 = 1999: 253–6.

and periphery in the empire, but its view of Rome is usually that of a loyal province rather than subaltern resistance.

Conclusion

The evidence examined above shows that Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* has almost no North African identity, and no detectable Punic colour. Apart from the local links momentarily and shockingly indicated in the famous *Madaurensem*, the novel could have been written in any part of the Roman Empire. Even the references to Punic and to Carthaginian history in Apuleius' speeches for Roman North African audiences are few and far from positive, and in the one passage where he discusses his own region of origin he is at pains to stress that it is not Punic, despite the probability that Punic was his first language. The remarkable style of the *Metamorphoses* seems to owe nothing specific to Punic and little to its author's North African origins; it is plausibly seen to be the apogee of the Asianic style which originated in Hellenistic Turkey and which touched Rome through Cicero. Likewise, its ideological outlook is Roman and cosmopolitan, appealing to a readership which thinks of itself as Roman and looks to the metropolis of Rome as the glamorous world centre; there is no real sign of regional resistance or subaltern resentment. In his novel, Apuleius looked to a wider audience of the mixed Greek and Roman culture of the contemporary empire, not to local colour and partisanship.

PART IV

Anatolians

*The victory of Greek Ionia in Xenophon's Ephesiaca**

Aldo Tagliabue

The East in the *Ephesiaca* is a topic that can be explored from two angles. First, Xenophon includes eastern regions in his novel, such as Egypt, Cilicia and Cappadocia. Second, the narrative is centred on Ephesus, which was a multicultural city and part of Ionia. In Greek literature, this region conjured different associations: it was seen, for example, as the land of Homer,¹ of luxury and of sex (as the tradition of the Milesian tales proves).² Interestingly, each of these perspectives on Ionia has a cultural dimension: the connection with Homer makes it a haven of Greekness, but lascivious practice (and lascivious story-telling) suggest an orientation towards the East. Of these two approaches, to the representations of eastern spaces and of Ephesus itself, the first has little value, since Xenophon shows no interest in the cultural differentiation of his world.³ Ephesus, by contrast, plays an important role in the *Ephesiaca*,⁴ and is represented in manifold different ways: for this reason, this chapter will focus on the city itself.

Although Ephesus is mentioned in every book of the *Ephesiaca*, its function varies: in the first and in the fifth book it is the setting for the narrative,⁵ while in the others it is evoked only in the memory of

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¹ Clearly suggested by the linguistic correspondence between the Ionic dialect and that used by Homer: see M. L. West 1988.

² See Bowie, this volume.

³ See Morgan 2007b: 149: 'The world represented is . . . Hellenocentric, but by dint of simply ignoring everything which is not Greek, not by building significant antitheses.' The only exception is the distinction between Greek and Barbarians, which, however, is limited to the episode of the pirates (1.13.1–2.2.2) and to a few other allusions, for which see Kuch 1996: 218.

⁴ On this, see Thomas 1995: 83: 'Ephesus is necessary to the plot.'

⁵ See *Ephesiaca* 1.1–1.10 and 5.15 (henceforth *Eph.*). Cf. Whitmarsh 2011a: 26, where the *Ephesiaca* is defined as a 'civic' novel, because 'considerable emphasis is placed on the beginning and ending in the *polis*'.

the characters. In every passage where the city is mentioned, however, Xenophon associates it with one of four different images:

1. Ephesus as the 'land of noble aristocrats', on the classical model (a portrait deriving from the actions of Habrocomes in the first chapter of the novel).⁶
2. Ephesus as the 'holy city of Artemis': this association enters the novel in the following chapter, where Xenophon describes the Ephesian procession and portrays Anthia as the goddess' double.⁷ Later in the text, this link is recalled by the protagonists with their Rhodian dedication,⁸ as well as by Anthia in her monologues.⁹
3. Ephesus as the 'land of luxury and sex': this definition emerges on the wedding night.¹⁰
4. Ephesus as the 'land of families and everlasting love': this image enters the novel first in the episode where Anthia recalls her homeland in discussion with the doctor Eudoxus,¹¹ then occurs again in the final scene, where Ephesus witnesses the birth of three new families of lovers.¹²

Xenophon's presentation of Ephesus, then, has nothing to do with the historical reality of his contemporary world. This sequence of presentations suggests that our author has, rather, an intense interest in Ephesus as a cultural space, an interest that may well spring from his awareness of the existing traditions surrounding Ionia. There is, however, another aspect that needs considering. Xenophon's primary interest is in his erotic narrative. As I recently argued,¹³ the *Ephesiaca* can be read as a *Bildungsroman* in which the protagonists discover that true love consists of fidelity and symmetry. As I will demonstrate shortly, Xenophon uses the novel's setting in Ephesus to support this progression: throughout the novel the first Ephesus – the classical polis which makes the love of the protagonists grow – is transformed first into the land of their lasciviousness and later into a haven for their faithfulness. The cultural complexity of Ephesus, between barbaric decadence and idealised Hellenism, thus also relates to the erotic narrative, which moves between erotic indulgence and idealisation.

⁶ See *Eph.* 1.1. ⁷ See *Eph.* 1.2. ⁸ See *Eph.* 1.12.2.

⁹ Cf. *Eph.* 1.11.5, 2.11.8 and 3.5.5, where Anthia defines Artemis as her 'ancestral goddess'.

¹⁰ See *Eph.* 1.8–9. ¹¹ See *Eph.* 3.4–5.

¹² See *Eph.* 5.15.4, where two couples, Leucon and Rhode and Hyperanthes and Cleisthenes, join the protagonists.

¹³ See Tagliabue 2012, which illustrates the main topics of my doctoral dissertation, a commentary on the first book of the *Ephesiaca*.

The first Ephesus of the *Ephesiaca* as a classical polis

In the first chapter of the novel, Habrocomes is described as a typical novelistic hero: he belongs to a wealthy family,¹⁴ he is extraordinarily beautiful¹⁵ and he is educated in both body and soul.¹⁶ In the novel's first sentence, moreover, Xenophon mentions the provenance of his family from this city.¹⁷ Shortly after, he also refers to the Ephesians' praise of the protagonist.¹⁸ Although a first reading of this chapter suggests that Xenophon is using Ephesus as a generic idealised land, on further examination a precise association emerges: this city is portrayed as a classical city, with classical Athens as its model. This link is established through the presentation of Habrocomes: in contrast to the usual novelistic pattern, whereby the female protagonist enters the scene before her partner,¹⁹ here Habrocomes' arrival precedes that of Anthia. This novelty seems indebted to Plato: since the motifs of the hero's worship as a god and the priority of his beauty over that of every statue are ascribed to male characters alone in the Platonic *Phaedrus*,²⁰ Habrocomes can be compared to a Platonic *eromenos*.²¹ More precisely, the theme of the lover who exults in the praises he receives²² recalls the protagonist of the Platonic *Lysis*, and the existence of this parallel seems to be confirmed by Xenophon's use of the adjective *δυσάλωτος*.²³ The first use of this word in an erotic context occurs in the Platonic dialogue: 'And besides, these handsome boys, when so praised and extolled, become full of pride and haughtiness (*δυσαλωτότεροι*): do you

¹⁴ See *Eph.* 1.1.1: 'In Ephesus there was a man named Lycomedes, one of the most powerful people in the city.'

¹⁵ See *Eph.* 1.1.1, where Habrocomes is described as 'a paragon of handsomeness without precedent in Ionia or anywhere else'.

¹⁶ See *Eph.* 1.1.2: 'His spiritual virtues blossomed along with his physical excellences.'

¹⁷ 'In Ephesus there was a man . . .' (ἦν ἐν Ἐφέσῳ ἀνὴρ) (*Eph.* 1.1.1).

¹⁸ See *Eph.* 1.1.3: 'Habrocomes was much sought after by all Ephesians.'

¹⁹ This happens in Chariton, where Callirhoe precedes Chaereas (see 1.1.2), and again in Heliodorus (see 1.2). (The issue does not arise in Achilles Tatius, because of the character-bound narration.) Only Longus describes Daphnis before Chloe, for reasons that can be explained with reference to his different aims: he focuses, initially at least, on the protagonists' symmetry (cf. 1.2.3 and 1.5.3).

²⁰ *Eph.* 1.1.3: 'they treated the young man like a god'; 1.1.6: 'wherever Habrocomes appeared, no statue looked handsome and no picture was admired'. Cf. Pl. *Phdr.* 251a: 'But he who is newly initiated . . . when he sees a godlike face or form which is a good image of beauty . . . reveres the beautiful one as a god, and if he did not fear to be thought stark mad, he would offer sacrifice to his beloved as to an idol or a god.'

²¹ The possibility that Xenophon knew the *Phaedrus* is likely, since this work was 'the most widely read Platonic dialogue' in the imperial era (Herrmann 2007: 209). See also Trapp 1990.

²² See *Eph.* 1.1.4: 'The young man held a high opinion of himself.'

²³ The imperial readership of this dialogue is more difficult to assess than that of the *Phaedrus* (see Tarrant 2000: 102), but since some openings of Platonic dramatic dialogues were performed orally in the imperial era (see Plut. *Mor.* 711c), the incipit of the *Lysis* might have been known by a wide audience through these performances.

not think so?²⁴ Xenophon is the first after Plato in Greek literature to adopt δυσάλωτος in the same context, and Heliodorus seems to acknowledge this originality, naming Charicleia ἡ δυσάλωτος, ‘the impregnable’.²⁵ Finally, after the presentation of Anthia, the fact that Habrocomes’ beauty surpasses that of all others recalls the erotic dominance of Lysis and other Platonic *eromenoi*.

The attribution of this pattern to Habrocomes is confirmed by Anthia’s behaviour later in the text: immediately after falling in love, the heroine unexpectedly but coherently plays the role of *erastes*, as she welcomes the outpouring of Habrocomes’ beauty,²⁶ and then identifies her partner as *eromenos*.²⁷

This reversal of the anticipated gender roles leads me to an initial conclusion: here Xenophon compares Ephesus to a Platonic Athens, where the Ephesians, as the young boys of the Platonic dialogues, praise the ‘most beautiful’ of them. The effect of their behaviour on Habrocomes is negative, since he becomes impious towards Eros and rejects love.²⁸

Habrocomes’ *paideia* is portrayed similarly: the hero trains as if he were a member of the Athenian aristocracy. ‘Hunting, riding and training with heavy weapons’²⁹ were very popular disciplines in classical Greece; Xenophon of Athens, on whom our author models his literary identity,³⁰ is a very plausible model for this list. The educational value of hunting is addressed by the historian in his *Cynegeticus*, in which he argues that this activity ‘called for self-denial, endurance, and hard physical effort’.³¹ Conversely, in the imperial era ‘hunting meant a good morning’s gallop’; Arrian, who wrote a similar treatise *On Hunting*, ‘does not claim too much for the hunting field as a school of

²⁴ Pl. *Lys.* 206a.

²⁵ Hld. 4.7.1. This possibility is supported by Heliodorus’ extensive intertextual use of our author (see Schnepf 1887 for a list of parallels).

²⁶ See *Eph.* 1.3.2: ‘Anthia too was in a bad way, as with eyes wide open she took in Habrocomes’ handsomeness as it flowed into her’ (ἀναπεπταμένοις τοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς τὸ Ἀβροκόμου κάλλος εἰσρέον δεχομένη). While the motif is clearly Platonic, the direct debt to the *Phaedrus* must be tested. The possible Platonic model is *Phdr.* 251b: ‘As the effluence of beauty enters him through the eyes (δεξιόμενος γὰρ τοῦ κάλλους τὴν ἀπορροήν διὰ τῶν ὀμμάτων), he is warmed.’ Cf. also *Phdr.* 251c and 255c. The first reason why an intertextual relationship can be suggested is that both Plato and Xenophon use δέχομαι and κάλλος as its object, and this combination is rare. In addition, Xenophon replaces ἀπορροή, ‘stream’, with the participle εἰσρέον, ‘as it flowed’: although this verb does not occur in the *Phaedrus*, it appears to be Platonic too: see *Crat.* 420a–b, ‘Love is so called because it flows in from without’ (ἔρως δὲ [ἐκαλεῖτο], ὅτι ἐσρεῖ ἔξωθεν). That similar parallels can be found in Achilles Tatius (see Bychkov 1999) makes Xenophon’s direct debt here all the more plausible.

²⁷ See *Eph.* 1.4.7: ‘The one I love is haughty (σοβαρὸς οὗτος ἐρώμενος).’

²⁸ See *Eph.* 1.1.5: ‘He did not even recognize Eros as a god.’ ²⁹ *Eph.* 1.1.2.

³⁰ See Capra 2008. ³¹ Anderson 1985: 107.

character'.³² This difference suggests that hunting was regarded as a central part of an aristocrat's self-fashioning only in the classical era. The same can be said of riding, the subject of two other works of Xenophon of Athens (*Hippiarchicus* and *On Horsemanship*), and another activity that apparently declined in the Hellenistic era. Finally, ὀπλομαχία, 'training with heavy weapons', was the byword for hoplite warfare, which 'was the most important offensive land arm of the polis' and 'remained so in most of Greece until the late fourth century BC'.³³ A further connection with Xenophon of Athens is suggested by the description of Ischomachus' education in the *Oeconomicus*, where riding and training are again described in similar terms.³⁴

Overall, this idealised portrait confirms the representation of Ephesus as a classical polis. However, unlike the Athenian *kaloikagathoi*, Habrocomes privileges the achievements of his body over those of his soul:³⁵ his moral behaviour, as well as his attitude to love, is not yet mature.

Ephesus, holy city of Artemis

The second stage occurs in the following chapter of the novel, where Xenophon portrays the procession of Artemis as a definitively Ephesian event.³⁶ This apparent connection with the realia of the city has often attracted the interest of scholars seeking to solve the much-debated issue of Xenophon's provenance.³⁷ A fictional text cannot reveal the origin of its writer;³⁸ but the question of the 'realism' of details of Ephesus in this

³² Anderson 1985: 107. ³³ Spence 1993: 165.

³⁴ Ischomachus states: 'I usually mount my horse and go through exercises, imitating as closely as I can the exercises needed in warfare' (11.17); Socrates replies: 'we know that you are considered one of our best horsemen and wealthiest citizens' (11.20). Unlike that of Habrocomes, however, Ischomachus' *paideia* already makes him a moral person, as his following statement proves: 'Do you not see that this is just what I am constantly practising – showing my traducers that I wrong no man and do all the good I can to many?' (11.22).

³⁵ See *Eph.* 1.1.4: '... glorying both in his spiritual accomplishments (τοῖς τῆς ψυχῆς κατορθώμασι) and even more so in his physical beauty (τῷ κάλλει τοῦ σώματος)'. The importance of this sentence is suggested by the fact that Habrocomes revises his view later in the novel (with reference to his servile status in Apsyrtus' house): 'They have power over my body (τοῦ σώματος), but I keep a free soul (τὴν ψυχὴν)'.

³⁶ See *Eph.* 1.2.2: 'A local festival for Artemis was underway.'

³⁷ For a review see Ruiz Montero 1994: 1088–91. Views differ: while some attribute an Ephesian origin to Xenophon, others suggest a provenance in Egypt, since the novel has several references to this land. Griffiths 1978 aims for compromise: he argues that Xenophon could have been Ephesian, but then he would have spent most of his life in Egypt.

³⁸ The Greek novel as a genre is interested only in a realism of coherence, but not of correspondence. On this 'rule', see Bowie 1977: 91–6 and Ruiz Montero 1994: 1121. More specifically on Xenophon, see Schmeling 1980: 17: 'Perhaps he had other goals than to write realistically about events and places.'

passage also bears significantly on the matter in hand, since contemporary allusions would interrupt any representation of a classical polis. Yet as we shall see, there is no correlation between the historical evidence and Xenophon's chapter.

Let us turn first to the presentation of Artemis, the tutelary goddess of this city from the archaic era to 431 CE.³⁹ Her presence in Ephesus is characterised by an Eastern influence: she was first worshipped here as an Asiatic goddess with her distinctive multi-breasted statue,⁴⁰ and when the Greeks colonised the city and introduced their own cult of Artemis,⁴¹ they retained the local image of the goddess.⁴² Given this framework, it is telling that in his portrait of Anthia Xenophon does not exploit any local references:⁴³ his combination of the χίτων, νεβρίς, γωρυτός and κύνες instead clearly recalls the representation of the Greek Artemis in the classical era.⁴⁴

A similar absence of Ephesian traits is found in the description of the ceremony. The main festivals dedicated to Artemis in this city, which are dated after the Greek occupation, are the Ephesia, the Artemisia and the feast at Ortygia.⁴⁵ The first was part of a pan-Ionian festival, which was celebrated every four years in the Panionion until the fourth century BCE, when it was moved for safety reasons to a place outside the city.⁴⁶ The nature of the Artemisia is difficult to establish, since inscriptions attest to its name alone.⁴⁷ Finally, Strabo offers a detailed account of the third feast, which centred on celebrating the birth of the goddess.⁴⁸ Overall, these Ephesian events do not match Xenophon's description, because they involved the entire population, and were led by male priests. As a result, we

³⁹ As Scherrer 1995: 2 argues, at this date Ephesus housed the Third Ecumenical Council and this suggests that at that time the pagan cults were abolished.

⁴⁰ Artemis Ephesia was identified either with the Asian Grandmother or with Cybele or Anahita. On this, see Burkert 1985: 149. In addition, she was considered as 'eine Verkörperung von Asie' (Burkert 1999: 60). More generally, on the Eastern representation of Artemis, see Fleischer 1973 and Burkert 1999: 68–70.

⁴¹ On the choice of Ephesus as a new homeland of Artemis, see Tac. *Ann.* 3.61.

⁴² See Thomas 1995: 93: 'The fact that images of Artemis Ephesia are widespread in the Roman world has great bearing on the issue of the general knowledge of the iconographic peculiarity of Artemis of Ephesos.'

⁴³ See Whitmarsh 2011a: 30: 'Xenophon's Hellenised version of Artemis may well reflect not the author's ignorance of the genuine Ephesian cult, but precisely the opposite: a tendency among contemporary Ephesians to downplay non-Greek elements.'

⁴⁴ See *LIMC* 2 (1984), s.v. Artemis, nos. 191–265: the models of Artemis Laphria and of Artemis from Versailles are very similar to Xenophon's description and we know that both became popular in the fifth century BCE, when Artemis' short *chiton* first appeared (ibid. 747).

⁴⁵ For discussion, see Knibbe 1995: 153, Rogers 1999: 241 and Portefaix 1999: 613.

⁴⁶ See Thuc. 3.104 and Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 4.25. ⁴⁷ See Arnold 1972: 17 n. 4.

⁴⁸ See Strab. 14.1.20.

can agree with Ruiz Montero that 'we are no longer sure that the description of Xenophon's initial procession is realistic'.⁴⁹

That said, Calame stands out from the crowd with his suggestion that a minor Ephesian ritual, the procession of Artemis Daitis,⁵⁰ might lie at the origin of the description in the *Ephesiaca*.⁵¹ This event is described in the *Etymologicum Magnum*:

Daitis: a place in Ephesus, as is explained by the following *aition*. Clymena, daughter of the king of the city, went to a place outside of the city accompanied by boys and young girls and carrying a statue of Artemis. After having played and enjoyed themselves in a field, Clymena told them to prepare a banquet for the goddess. The girls found celery and then they reclined on the grass. The boys instead, after having picked up salt from the near salt-pits, offered it to the goddess in place of a meal. The following year, however, this ritual was not repeated and the young people suffered a visitation of cosmic anger and an epidemic sent by Artemis: they were all killed. Then an oracular response was pronounced: people started again to propitiate the goddess and to offer her a meal, following the fashion used by the young boys and girls. After this fact, the epidemic stopped and the goddess and the place were called from this meal Daitis. Then, a Lydian tavern-keeper who was living there offered food to the guests. His chief's name was Ephesus, from whom the city's name derives.⁵²

Given this description, Calame argues that Xenophon's description shows a 'certain verisimilitude'⁵³ with this ceremony: both rituals share the presence of boys and girls in a ceremony for Artemis, the leadership of a noble woman and the location outside Ephesus.

Although this hypothesis is suggestive, Calame does not address the differences that render his conclusion unacceptable. To begin with, this procession took place in a specific site of Ephesus called Daitis: since Xenophon does not mention it, the location weakens the possibility of a reference to this event in the *Ephesiaca*. Second, this ritual is described as a very old ceremony: this makes its existence at Xenophon's time implausible and his knowledge of it uncertain. Finally, in the novel the transport of Artemis' statue and the meal are missing: while Xenophon might have decided to subtly 'hide' the first element in Anthia's portrait, the silence on the second, which is the main element of Calame's source, constitutes

⁴⁹ Ruiz Montero 2007: 268. For an earlier and more radical scepticism, cf. Nilsson 1957³: 243 and Gärtner 1969: 2058–9.

⁵⁰ For a study of this ceremony, see Heberdey 1904. ⁵¹ Calame 1997: 93–6.

⁵² This translation is from Calame 1997: 94, with minor corrections.

⁵³ Calame 1997: 95.

a strong objection.⁵⁴ These discrepancies and the lack of close connections do not allow us to confirm Calame's hypothesis.

This conclusion is significant: since the combination of a temple, a ceremony and a goddess is a typical sequence of every polis,⁵⁵ Xenophon seems also to use his second Ephesus as a traditional Greek city. In addition, ceremonies of Artemis such as this were popular in that era, as those attested in Brauron, Athens and Patrai prove.⁵⁶ We can conclude, then, that Xenophon seems here too to model his Ephesus after the classical polis.

This suggests that, through his second portrait of the city, Xenophon may be still focusing on Habrocomes' classical *paideia*. Interestingly, what is more, his attitude to love changes here: since the protagonist falls in love with Anthia after the procession, Ephesus constitutes for him and his future wife a civic and religious context where their love is born, grows and matures into marriage. The influence of the city is so significant here that the wedding is not decided by Anthia and Habrocomes, but by their parents and by Apollo's oracle.⁵⁷ In conclusion, Ephesus as a classical polis lies at the origin of the protagonists' relationship.

Ephesus, land of luxury and sex

This consistently classicising image of Ephesus is derailed in the eighth chapter of the novel: the description of the wedding night, with its elements of luxury and lasciviousness, introduces a different view of the city, which in turn affects Anthia and Habrocomes' behaviour.

Luxury characterises Habrocomes' nuptial room, which is composed of a golden bed with purple tapestry and covered by a Babylonian canopy.⁵⁸ As Smith illustrates, ancient Greeks usually preferred simple beds and they never made them with gold.⁵⁹ Furthermore, construction of canopies is

⁵⁴ Xenophon includes in his procession *κάνβα*, 'basket of reeds' or 'bread-basket', but these objects traditionally carried sacred barley and not food for banquets. Thus they do not demonstrate the existence of a meal for Artemis.

⁵⁵ On this, see Burkert 1985: 225: 'the living religious practice of the Greeks is concentrated on festivals'.

⁵⁶ For Brauron, see Dowden 1989: 20–4; for Athens, see Plut. *Arist.* 20, who describes the cult of Artemis Eukleia. For Patrai, see Paus. 8.18.11.

⁵⁷ The Clarian oracle can be considered part of the Ephesian environment, as Cueva 2004: 41 argues. On the importance of this sanctuary in the Hellenistic era, see Parke 1967: 123, while for a detailed study of the oracles delivered there, see Oesterheld 2008.

⁵⁸ See *Eph.* 1.8.2: 'The chamber had been prepared for Anthia and Habrocomes: a golden bed had been spread with purple sheets, and above the bed a Babylonian canopy had been finely embroidered.'

⁵⁹ See Smith 1848: 673: 'the κλίνη was generally made of wood... At a later period, bedsteads were not only made of solid ivory and veneered with tortoiseshell, but sometimes had silver feet'.

attested only in Egypt and Babylonia.⁶⁰ The extravagance and cost of these objects affected how Greeks perceived them: as Morgan argues in relation to Babylonian clothes, Greek writers frequently 'refer to them with moralistic disdain as a byword for opulence and luxury'.⁶¹ In addition, Timagoras, the Athenian who in Babylonia accepted the gift of a Persian bed, was killed by his fellow citizens because of his love of luxury.⁶²

The theme of lasciviousness is underlined in the description of the decorations of the canopy, which focus on physical love. A first hint of this notion appears in the first side, where we find sparrows in a context full of Erotes: these animals were associated with Eros in Greek literature since the time of Sappho,⁶³ and they were seen as aphrodisiacs.⁶⁴ Also erotic is the depiction of the love of Ares and Aphrodite on the other side of the canopy. The model of this scene is certainly Demodocus' account in the *Odyssey*.⁶⁵ Since in the Homeric poem this affair is treated as adultery, and it was thereafter seen by the Greeks as a symbol for an enjoyable and immoral love,⁶⁶ the allusion surely suggests lasciviousness here. We can, what is more, associate this Ephesus with Scheria, which is the place where Demodocus performs. This parallel enriches the emphasis on luxury that belongs to this image of the city, since in the *Odyssey* Alcinoüs famously describes the indulgence of his population: 'And ever to us is the banquet dear, and the lyre, and the dance, and changes of raiment, and warm baths, and the couch.'⁶⁷ This view of the Phaeacians was then fixed by later commentators of Homer, who consider them to be 'a people dominated by pleasure'.⁶⁸

Finally, this description of the canopy is not merely decorative: as was the case with the earlier, 'classical' portrait of Ephesus, the protagonists are influenced by this new representation of the city, since it is in this special

⁶⁰ The available pieces of evidence from these lands are discussed by Baker 1966. See esp. 43, where there is a description of a canopy which was found in the tomb of the Egyptian queen Hetepheres (2613–2594 BCE).

⁶¹ Morgan 2007b: 29. ⁶² Cf. Plut. *Pelop.* 30.6 and Ath. *Deipn.* 2.48d–e.

⁶³ Sapph. fr. 1.9–10. ⁶⁴ Ath. *Deipn.* 9.391f.

⁶⁵ *Od.* 8.266–367. For a more detailed demonstration of this parallel, see Tagliabue 2012: 22–5.

⁶⁶ See *Od.* 8.329: 'Ill deeds thrive not', while the word 'adultery' is recalled three verses later through the reference to the 'fine imposed on one taken in adultery' (332: μοιχᾶγρία). Among the numerous sources for its reception the most significant is Ath. 1.14c–d: 'Demodocus at the Phaeacian court sings of the amours of Ares and Aphrodite, not in approval of such passion, but to deter his hearers from illicit desires, or else because he knew that they had been brought up in a luxurious mode of life and therefore offered for their amusement what was most in keeping with their character.'

⁶⁷ *Od.* 8.248–9.

⁶⁸ Heraclit. *Alleg.* 69.7. The same view is offered by Plut. *Mor.* 19e–20a, who describes the Phaeacians' lifestyle as 'a cowardly way of living in luxury and wantonness'.

thalamos, and imitating Ares and Aphrodite, that they achieve their first union:⁶⁹ they become luxurious and lascivious lovers.

That said, the peculiar nature of this new Ephesus calls for some more detailed reflection: at first glance, it provides a contrast with the previous one, which is highlighted by the study of the ancient traditions about Ionia. From the sixth century BCE on, this region was seen by Greek writers as the 'land of luxury'. This association, which was distilled into the words ἀβροσύνη and τρυφή,⁷⁰ was rooted in a moralising discourse of cultural othering, since the Ionians were accused of having been corrupted by the foreign and barbaric populations of Asia Minor (especially Persians and Lydians).⁷¹ The first testimony of this tradition is Xenophanes of Colophon, who reproaches his fellow citizens for the useless luxuries (ἀβροσύνας ἀνωφελέας)⁷² they learnt from Lydians, such as wearing purple clothes and special hairstyles.⁷³ Phylarchus decries the immorality of this behaviour, since he states that before this contact the Colophonians were 'austere in their way of life'.⁷⁴ Then, in the fifth century, the popularity of this view of Ionia is proved by Attic comic poets, who often 'make fun of the Ionians' luxuriousness'.⁷⁵ After the classical era, this characterisation became common among Greek writers; its persistence into the imperial era is proved by, for example, Chariton, who exploits it in his description of Ionia and Miletus.⁷⁶ The emergence of this 'ideological' framework leads us to conclude that the third image of Ephesus in the *Ephesiaca* is not Xenophon's invention, but a reflection of existing traditions about Ionia. This conclusion is reinforced by two observations. First,

⁶⁹ This parallel is highlighted by Xenophon through the repetition of Anthia's transport to Habrocomes before and after the Odyssean story: cf. 1.8.1: 'they escorted the girl (ἤγον τὴν κόρη) to the bridal chamber' and 1.8.3: 'under the canopy itself they brought Anthia to Habrocomes, put her on the bed (κατέκλιναν τὴν Ἀνθίαν ἀγαγόντες...)'.

⁷⁰ See Starr 1977: 139–40: '*Habrosynē*, or luxury, is a leitmotif of the poetry of the seventh and sixth centuries; *tryphē* (daintiness) is a contemptuous word that was used later for the most part.'

⁷¹ On the association between these populations and luxury, see Nenci 1983: 1027, who comments that for ancient authors 'the *tryphē* has clearly been transmitted from the East to the West. It was born in Persia... and from the Persian it passed to the Lydians.' Other reasons for the connection between luxury and Ionia are 'the degeneration caused by urbanisation', 'the increase of wealth due to trade' (Nenci 1983: 1028) and the existence of a benign climate in this region (see also Alty 1982: 7).

⁷² Fr. 3.1. ⁷³ See *ibid.* 3.3: παναλουργέα φάρεα. ⁷⁴ Ath. 12.526a.

⁷⁵ Alty 1982: 8 and the references there. Thucydides also reflects this tradition, claiming that 'the Athenians were among the very first to lay aside their arms and, adopting an easier mode of life, to change to more luxurious ways' (1.6.3). For this reason, they decided to wear special Ionian clothes. Nevertheless, they later returned to a Doric mode of dress and to their original moral attitude.

⁷⁶ When Theron persuades his fellow pirates to move to Ionia and not to Athens, he tells them: 'The proper place for us is Ionia, where royal riches flow in from all over Asia and people love luxury (ἀνθρωποι τρυφῶντες) and ask no questions' (Char. 1.11.7). For similar characterisations, see 5.1.5, 5.10.7.

the Ephesians themselves were considered to be particularly luxurious. In Athenaeus' twelfth book, where the author focuses on 'τροφή as the reason for the decadence of very important cities',⁷⁷ there is a reference to Democritus of Ephesus' work about the Artemision, in which he 'tells the story of the Ephesians' luxury and of the dyed garments which they wore'.⁷⁸ Second, it is striking that the aforementioned term ἄβροσύνη is cognate with ἄβρός, which constitutes the first part of Ἀβρόκομη; it is likely that Xenophon is deliberately using the name of his protagonist to underline the connection with Ephesian luxury. This possibility is supported by a closer examination of ἄβροσύνη: at its origin this notion was part of the positive self-definition of Greek nobleness, particularly in the Ionian context.⁷⁹ According to this first connotation, ἄβροσύνη designates not only wealth, but also an ideal beauty, as does the adjective ἄβρός with its meanings of 'graceful' and 'pretty'.⁸⁰ Later, the birth of the criticism of the East associated with the Persians transformed this concept into a negative one: 'ἄβρός and its cognates started to designate features and traits of women and Eastern people which express moral slackness and weakness of the body and the soul'.⁸¹ Overall, Habrocomes' representation seems to recall both the positive and the negative sides of ἄβροσύνη: at the beginning of the novel he is both beautiful and rich but he then becomes luxurious and immoderate.

Luxurious connotations lead seamlessly to suggestions of illicit sexuality. In the ancient world as a whole, luxury and lasciviousness are related concepts: for example, Strato, the king of Sidon, who is mentioned for his luxury, used to arrange parties with many courtesans from all over the world.⁸² Second, a special relationship between sex and Ionia is suggested by the fragmentary literary tradition of the Milesian tales, 'plainly pornographic and sensationalist stories',⁸³ which are described by Plutarch as ἀκόλαστοι, 'shameless'.⁸⁴ Although few passages have been preserved, the

⁷⁷ Nenci 1983: 1027.

⁷⁸ Ath. 525c. Furthermore, the hypothesis that Xenophon has read (and expects his own readers to have read) Chariton, which is still accepted by a good number of scholars (see Tilg 2010: 85–92, following Bowie 2002: 47–63), would make the former's exploitation of 'Ionia, land of luxury' even clearer, and it would also introduce the possibility that in presenting this image of Ephesus Xenophon might be directly drawing on Chariton's Miletus.

⁷⁹ See Lombardo 1983: 1094, who, following Starr 1977: 139–40, considers the establishment of ἄβροσύνη 'one of the key elements of the definition of aristocratic values in Archaic Greece'.

⁸⁰ LSJ, s.v. ἄβρός. For a list of the occurrences of this adjective in Greek archaic poetry, see Lombardo 1983: 1085, nn. 26–8.

⁸¹ Lombardo 1983: 1098. The same scholar also argues that, apart from the pre-emptive mention in Xenophanes, the contexts where the negative view of ἄβροσύνη emerges are 'the Greek continent and especially Attica after the Persian wars'.

⁸² See Ath. 531b. ⁸³ Harrison 1998b: 63; see also Bowie, this volume. ⁸⁴ Plut. *Crass.* 32.

title of this work suggests that Ionia was an environment where sex was commonly addressed by writers of fiction. It is likely that Ephesus was part of this picture.⁸⁵

In sum, then, Xenophon's description of the wedding night draws on local traditions, and their different nuances give cultural depth to the contrast between this Ephesus and the 'classical' one. Xenophon's earlier presentation of the city in Greek and moral terms now clashes with an immoral one, in which the East makes its first appearance in the *Ephesiaca*. This shift, however, need not be interpreted in a purely negative way. In this new environment, Habrocomes and Anthia's love becomes independent of the controlling influence of others; it becomes organically passionate. We are thus dealing with a new step in their relationship.

The last Ephesus of the *Ephesiaca* as a Homeric Ithaca

This emergent trajectory makes the study of the last image of Ephesus intriguing: as readers, we are led to expect that Xenophon will introduce a new characterisation of the city to complete this progression. This final stage begins in the episode where Anthia recounts her story to the doctor Eudoxus (a fellow Ephesian); here Ephesus is for the first time the land of families and everlasting love (3.4–5). Significantly, this episode takes place in Perilaus' house, at the point where Anthia's conjugal fidelity is both imperilled (in the sense that she is being coerced into remarriage) and reasserted (in that her commitment to Habrocomes is unwavering).⁸⁶ Furthermore, the dialogue between Eudoxus and Anthia recalls the epic encounter between Odysseus and the Phaeacians: this parallel suggests that Xenophon's last Ephesus is modelled on Ithaca. This association with marital harmony is confirmed in the last chapter of the novel, where the protagonists, after their reunion, return to Ephesus to establish their *oikos*.⁸⁷ Here, Anthia and Habrocomes complete their erotic *paideia* by instituting an everlasting relationship. Thus, like Odysseus on Ithaca, the fourth Ephesus is the context where the *Ephesiaca*'s erotic ideal develops and achieves its final form.

⁸⁵ Proof of this seems to come from Petronius' stories of the 'Boy of Pergamum' and the 'Widow of Ephesus', whose sexual tone suggests that Ionian cities 'are the kind of environment where such sexually interesting things happen' (Harrison 1998b: 67).

⁸⁶ This is clear in her imprecation to Eudoxus (*Eph.* 3.5.7–8), especially the first part.

⁸⁷ See *Eph.* 5.15.3: 'When they had done this, they went up to the city and built great tombs for their parents, who from old age and dejection had predeceased them, and went on to spend lives together that they celebrated like a festival.' On the social importance of this event for the development of the protagonists, see Lalanne 2006: 118–22.

Let us begin by considering the Eudoxus episode in more detail, focusing on the association between Ephesus and Ithaca:

While Anthia . . . [was sojourning with Perilaus] there came to Tarsus an elderly Ephesian, a doctor by trade, named Eudoxus. He arrived after being shipwrecked on a voyage to Egypt. This Eudoxus made the rounds of the most respectable men in Tarsus, begging clothing from some, money from others, recounting to each one his misfortune. He paid a visit to Perilaus too, and told him that he was an Ephesian and a doctor by trade.⁸⁸

Each of these situations recalls Odysseus' arrival at Scheria: there are Homeric parallels for Eudoxus' role as castaway,⁸⁹ beggar,⁹⁰ wanderer⁹¹ and storyteller.⁹² The epic echoes continue as the scene unfurls. After the first encounter with Anthia, 'Eudoxus became a friend of the family and saw Anthia each time he visited, enjoying every amenity and always asking her to send him back to Ephesus, for his wife and children were there.'⁹³ Finally, Anthia makes her promise to Eudoxus: 'And I myself will give you money and arrange for your transport home. You will be able to board a ship before anyone finds out and sail to Ephesus.'⁹⁴ These last two passages confirm the Homeric parallel: just as Odysseus asks Arete to provide him with the means to return to Ithaca and receives a positive answer,⁹⁵ so Eudoxus does to Anthia.⁹⁶ The consequence of this parallel is that Ephesus, where the doctor's family lives, becomes the equivalent of Ithaca. There are implications too for the characterisation of Anthia, since her origin from Ephesus is stressed in this episode: 'she enjoyed Eudoxus' company, since he reminded her of her home town'.⁹⁷ This remembering of her Ephesian identity is also a reaffirmation of her conjugal fidelity. Similarly, when the protagonists arrive back at Ephesus and become active citizens, the episode recalls Odysseus' visit to Laertes in the last book of the Homeric poem, which re-establishes the power of his family over Ithaca.⁹⁸

⁸⁸ *Eph.* 3.4.1–2. ⁸⁹ See *Od.* 5.368–76: Odysseus is forced to leave his raft.

⁹⁰ See *Od.* 6.35–6: Odysseus is naked and full of need.

⁹¹ See *Od.* 7.152, when Odysseus declares: 'for long time have I been suffering woes far from my friends'.

⁹² Odysseus tells his whole story in Alcinoüs' palace: see *Od.* 11.367–9 for Alcinoüs' mention of this performance.

⁹³ *Eph.* 3.4.4. ⁹⁴ *Eph.* 3.5.8.

⁹⁵ Odysseus makes his first request to Arete and then repeats it to Alcinoüs: see respectively *Od.* 7.39–152 and 222–3.

⁹⁶ The answer to Odysseus is given not by Arete, but by Alcinoüs in the speech that contains the significant verse: 'But as for your sending, . . . I appoint a time thereto' (*Od.* 7.317). Arete, instead, gives Odysseus 'the beautiful presents, the clothing and the gold' (*Od.* 8.439–41).

⁹⁷ *Eph.* 3.4.3. ⁹⁸ See *Od.* 24.205–412.

To an extent, the Homeric model might appear obvious and unremarkable, as the *Odyssey* is the hypotext of every Greek novel; the identification between the protagonists' homeland and Ithaca might be thought typical of the genre rather than particularly marked in Xenophon's text.⁹⁹ In my opinion, however, the analysis of these two passages of the *Ephesiaca* and the fact that this image is the last of a rich sequence make this association meaningful. To begin with, Ithaca, the homeland of Odysseus and a Greek polis,¹⁰⁰ interrupts the representation of Ephesus as a luxurious and lascivious city. The reason for this break has a clear erotic foundation: as Ithaca is where Odysseus and Penelope celebrate their preservation of conjugal fidelity, Xenophon's allusion highlights the protagonists' discovery of a new dimension in their love.

Rhodes also features in this final phase, since the protagonists' reunion and sharing of misadventures, which both take place in this city, appear to be a revisitation of the last night of the *Odyssey*.¹⁰¹ As a result, Rhodes is also identified with Ithaca. This extension of the Homeric parallel is significant, because in this event Xenophon, like Homer, focuses on fidelity and not on the purely physical love of the wedding night. This further demonstrates that the contrast between the luxurious and the 'Ithacan' Ephesus is deliberate; interestingly, moreover, it also revises the earlier process of Homeric 'mapping', which equated Ephesus with Scheria.

In sum, Xenophon returns at the close of the novel to a Hellenocentric view of this city, which recalls that of the beginning. However, we are not dealing with a precisely circular pattern: 'Ephesus as Ithaca' completes the ideal characterisation of the first Ephesus, as it adds enduring stability to the protagonists' erotic ideal.

A subtle interplay with the traditions of Ephesus

We should at this point recall that, as I noted at the beginning of this chapter, there was another ancient tradition making Ionia the birthplace of Homer, and that this legend affected the ideology of the Greek aristocracies in late-Hellenistic Ephesus. In identifying Ephesus with Ithaca, Xenophon could possibly be acknowledging this view. This leads us to a new

⁹⁹ See Fusillo 1989: 26–7.

¹⁰⁰ On the features of this city and of the other Homeric poleis, see Luce 1978.

¹⁰¹ Cf. *Eph.* 5.14–5.15.1 and *Od.* 23.241–365. Reunion and sharing of misadventures during the night are evidently Odyssean motifs. Additionally, the moment at which Anthia and Habrocomes go to bed also recalls Homer (note that in both texts all the other characters are sleeping: cf. *Eph.* 5.14.1 and *Od.* 23.297–9). For the possible influence of Chariton's intertext on this Odyssean parallel, see Tagliabue 2012: 26–7.

assessment of our interpretation: Xenophon's move from the lascivious to the Ithacan Ephesus becomes not just a denial of the Eastern tradition, but also a means of signalling his preference for another view of the city and of Ionia. In other words, at the end of his novel Xenophon seems to make a choice between two different Easts, a luxurious East with barbaric origins and a conservative one with Greek roots, in which the classical representation of Ephesus can be included. His multifaceted representation of this city is perhaps more sophisticated than is usually argued.

In support of this hypothesis, we might argue that it is unlikely that a writer who knew of the luxuriousness of Ionia would have been unaware of the other traditions about this region. In addition, according to Strabo, from the Hellenistic era onwards Ephesus assumed the leadership of the Ionian Dodecapolis.¹⁰² Since this institution was born in the archaic period, and the origin of the Ionians lay in Attica, this special role played by Ephesus suggests that the city wished to recall its Greek past. Another proof of this local interest comes from the civic rituals for Artemis instituted in 104 CE by Vibius Salutaris, articulating 'the social hierarchy of the city' via 'a specific form of the Ionian foundation story'.¹⁰³

The reason why this phenomenon is significant for us is that Homer (along with the Homeric Ithaca) and the classical Artemis, the subjects of the fourth and of the second Ephesuses of the *Ephesiaca*, played an important role in this celebration of the past of the city. On the one hand, the inclusion of the poet is to be expected, since Homer is the Ionian poet *par excellence*,¹⁰⁴ and this is suggested by different kinds of evidence. The first testimony comes in Plato, who introduces in his dialogue *Ion* the eponymous rhapsode who comes from Ephesus. Although 'we know nothing about him but what Plato reveals in his dialogue',¹⁰⁵ 'the fact that the known rhapsodes (not only Ion, but also Terpsicles and Cynaethus from Chios) tend to come from Ionia also suggests that Homeric traditions flourished in that area as late as the fifth century',¹⁰⁶ and the provenance from Ephesus allows us to include our city in this phenomenon.

Second, early Hellenistic Ephesus is connected with the story of two ancient scholars of Homer, Zenodotus and Aratus. Zenodotus, the 'first critical editor of Homer',¹⁰⁷ was born in Ephesus and his edition of the poems has been recently interpreted by West as 'a fourth-century Ephesian rhapsode's text'.¹⁰⁸ In addition, we know that Aratus spent his formative

¹⁰² See Str. 14.1.3.

¹⁰³ Rogers 1991: 138.

¹⁰⁴ See again M. L. West 1988.

¹⁰⁵ Woodruff 1983: 5.

¹⁰⁶ Graziosi 2002: 84–5.

¹⁰⁷ Lexicon *Suda*, s.v. Zenodotus.

¹⁰⁸ West 2001: 45.

years in Ephesus where his teacher was Menecrates, 'a grammarian as well as a poet in the Hesiodic manner'.¹⁰⁹ The results of this education would be his 'fairly reliable'¹¹⁰ critical edition of the *Odyssey*. Thus, an early Hellenistic interest in Homeric studies seems to exist in this city, and this supports the plausibility of the previous hypothesis.

Third, Strabo in his visit to Ephesus mentions a group of Hellenistic statues of Penelope and Eurycleia, set in the Artemision.¹¹¹ Since these sculptures appear to be original in the artistic context of the post-classical era, their existence seems to confirm the presence of a local Homeric tradition in Ephesus.

Finally, Aelius Aristides proves that the Ephesians' contemporaneous attachment to their Ionian Greek roots and to Homer was still important during the second century CE. In his oration *Concerning Concord* performed in 167 CE, we find a celebration of Ephesus as an exemplary homeland, which recalls Ithaca: 'All men journey to it, as if to their own country, and no one is so foolish, or so flies in the face of reality, that he would not concede that the city is the common chancellery of Asia and a refuge in time of need.'¹¹² In addition, the orator uses as an argument for unity the fact that Homer is the 'most common possession' of the Ionians.¹¹³

On the other hand, the classical Artemis is the protagonist of the Salutaris procession, in which this goddess lacked the multi-breasted representation and presented 'impeccable Greek divine credentials'.¹¹⁴ This rejection of the local Eastern Artemis matches the fact that from the Hellenistic era onwards 'representations of Artemis the virgin huntress are common at Ephesos'.¹¹⁵ As Thomas argues, this framework suggests that 'the city of Ephesos itself actively encouraged the identification of its patron goddess with the most generic characterization of Artemis'.¹¹⁶

If we consider all these elements, it becomes possible to conclude that both the Homeric Ephesus and the classical one of the beginning of the *Ephesiaca* might reflect traditions attached to the city itself. This suggests

¹⁰⁹ Pfeiffer 1968: 120. See also lexicon *Suda*, s.v. Aratus: 'he became a disciple of the Ephesian grammarian Menecrates'.

¹¹⁰ Pfeiffer 1968: 121.

¹¹¹ See Str. 14.1.23: 'Behind the temple I discovered a great number of offerings which were an expression of the high esteem in which artists held this place and the whole of the altar was almost filled with the works of Praxiteles. I was also introduced to some works of Thrason, who built the statue of Hecate, the waxen image of Penelope and the old woman Eurycleia.' For a discussion of this source, see Tagliabue forthcoming.

¹¹² Ael. Arist. *Or.* 23.24. Further, in Thomas' (1995: 100) view, other imperial sources attest a similar image of Ephesus as a 'place of sanctuary, of asylum'.

¹¹³ *Or.* 23.36. ¹¹⁴ Rogers 1991: 138.

¹¹⁵ Thomas 1995: 95. See Fleischer 1973: nos. 39–46 for some examples.

¹¹⁶ Thomas 1995: 95.

that Xenophon's sequence of Ephesuses, with his detachment from the luxurious one, might be part of the conservative attitude that was shared by the Hellenistic and contemporary Ephesians. In conclusion, our author seems to approach his presumed homeland from a local perspective.

Ephesus, Greekness and the *Ephesiaca*: Xenophon's position in the novelistic corpus

The decision to set the *Ephesiaca* in Ephesus was not a casual choice on Xenophon's part: our author critically acknowledges its traditions and uses this city to construct the protagonists' *Bildung* in the novel. The clearest sign of this pattern is that the victory of the Homeric city over the luxurious one helps our author to express his culminating vision of idealised love.

In conclusion, I would like to speculate that this sophisticated interplay with different Ephesian paradigms might also have metaliterary implications. As Ewen Bowie argued in 2002, Ionia was a 'privileged' ambience where the Greek novel developed,¹¹⁷ and not only the debt to the *Odyssey* and the defence of Greekness are crucial characteristics of the whole genre,¹¹⁸ but also luxury and lasciviousness. Within the traditional corpus, only Heliodorus is as committed to conjugal fidelity and reticent about physical love as Xenophon. In addition, the exceptionality of these two authors is supported by the fact that sex is always a central feature in other erotic fiction (particularly but not exclusively in the Roman novels).

Consequently, I would suggest that Xenophon might be using the interplay between these various images of Ephesus and the progression of the novel to express a claim to his own originality. On the one hand, when he indicates a parallel between the representation of Ares and Aphrodite's love and that of his protagonists, he proposes a first definition of this novel as an enjoyable tale, as Demodocus' story is.¹¹⁹ At the same time, in the light of our study of the multiple images of Ephesus, I would point to a second definition: in Xenophon's mind the *Ephesiaca* is identified also with an 'Ionian tale' and, thus, with a 'sexy' narrative.

¹¹⁷ Bowie 2002: 57.

¹¹⁸ On these elements, see e.g. Barchiesi 2006: 210: 'Le storie del romanzo greco hanno una forte solidarietà fra loro: sono storie di identità, in cui il riconoscersi e il ritrovarsi è il problema cruciale, e sono storie tutte formalmente costruite "a cappio", in cui si ritorna dopo molte peripezie al punto di partenza nella tranquilla città greca.' Therefore, it is possible to argue that the Greek novels 'avessero una funzione "rassicurante", di riconferma identitaria' (212).

¹¹⁹ At the end of his account, all the Homeric listeners are entertained: cf. the gods' reaction (*Od.* 8.343) and that of Odysseus and the Phaeacians (8.367–9).

Yet at the end of the novel this interpretation of the text is again replaced: along with his preference for the Homeric Ephesus, on the last night in Rhodes the protagonists' sharing of misadventures, imitating Odysseus and Penelope's summaries of their adventures,¹²⁰ turns the novel into a new *Odyssey*. Although this revised definition occurs in Rhodes, the parallel between this city and Ithaca, to which Ephesus is compared both in the third book and at the end of the *Ephesiaca*, leads me to conclude that Xenophon might be here looking at his novel as a different kind of Ionian story, which has a Homeric foundation and a specific focus on conjugal fidelity. His final settling on a conservative image of Ephesus, Ionia and the East, then, is not only a moral choice, but also a marker of the position of the *Ephesiaca* within the novelistic corpus.

¹²⁰ This is particularly evident in Odysseus' speech, which is a 'mirror-story' of the *Odyssey* (de Jong 2002b: 63).

CHAPTER 16

'Milesian tales'

Ewen Bowie

iunxit Aristides Milesia crimina secum,
pulsus Aristides nec tamen urbe sua est.
nec qui descripsit corrumpi semina matrum,
Eubius, impurae conditor historiae,
nec qui composuit nuper Sybaritica fugit,
nec qui concubitus non tacuere suos.

Aristides linked the charges against Miletus to his own person,
yet Aristides was not driven out of his own city.
Nor did the man who described how mothers' offspring were destroyed,
Eubius, establisher of an immoral account,
nor did the man who recently composed Sybaritic tales go into exile,
nor the ones who did not keep silent about their own liaisons.

Ovid *Tristia* 2.413–18

vertit Aristiden Sisenna, nec obfuit illi
historiae turpis inseruisse iocos.

Sisenna translated Aristides, and it was not a problem
for him to have woven filthy pranks into a narrative.

Ovid *Tristia* 2.443–4

τὴν δὲ γερουσίαν τῶν Σελευκέων ἀθροίσας, εἰσὴνεγκεν ἀκόλαστα
βιβλία τῶν Ἀριστείδου Μιλησιακῶν, οὗτι ταῦτά γε κατα-
ψευσάμενος· εὐρέθη γὰρ ἐν τοῖς ρουστίου σκευοφόροις, καὶ παρέσχε
τῷ Σουρήνῃ καθυβρίσαι πολλὰ καὶ κατασκῶψαι τοὺς Ῥωμαίους, εἰ
μηδὲ πολεμοῦντες ἀπέχεσθαι πραγμάτων καὶ γραμμάτων δύναν-
ται τοιούτων. τοῖς μέντοι Σελευκεῦσιν ἐδόκει σοφὸς ἀνὴρ ὁ Αἴσω-
πος εἶναι, τὸν Σουρήναν ὁρῶσι τὴν μὲν τῶν Μιλησιακῶν ἀκολαστη-
μάτων πῆραν ἐξηρτημένον πρόσθεν, ὅπισθεν δὲ Παρθικὴν Σύβαριν
ἐφελκόμενον ἐν τοσαῖσδε παλλακίδων ἀμάξαις... ψεκτὸς μὲν γὰρ
ὁ ρούστιος, ἀναιδεῖς δὲ Πάρθοι τὰ Μιλησιακὰ ψέγοντες, ὧν πολ-
λοὶ βεβασιλεύκασιν ἐκ Μιλησίων καὶ Ἰωνίδων ἑταιρῶν γεγονότες
Ἀρσακίδαί.

Gathering together the *Gerousia* of Seleuceia he brought before them the licentious books of Aristides' *Milesiaka*, and in this at any rate he was not perpetrating a falsehood; for they had been found in Rustius' baggage train, and they gave Surenas the opportunity to hurl many insults and taunts against the Romans, unable even when at war to abstain from such acts and writings. But the Seleuceians reflected that Aesop was a wise man, when they saw Surenas with the bag containing the Milesian licence slung over his shoulder in front of him, but followed behind by a Parthian Sybaris in so many waggons full of his concubines . . . Rustius was indeed to be criticised, but the Parthians were shameless to criticise Milesian tales, since many Arsacids had held the royal throne despite having been born from Milesian and Ionian prostitutes. Plutarch, *Crassus* 32.4–6

The above passages are among our few clues to the nature of narratives that in Greek were apparently called Milesian tales. In 1996 I aligned myself with those scholars who held the defining characteristic of these narratives to have been that they were told about characters and/or events set in Miletus, and that this might be their only connection with Miletus or indeed with Ionia.¹

What has happened since then? In a paper published in 1998 Stephen Harrison revived a moderate form of the thesis argued by Bürger in 1892.² Bürger's suggestion had been that the *Milesian Tales* were a novel in which Aristides was both the protagonist and a first-person narrator. Harrison suggested that Aristides' *Milesian Tales* were rather 'a collection of salacious stories not unconnected with the purer tradition of the Greek erotic novel, stories by a non-Milesian writing a prurient exposé in a pseudo-ethnographical manner of a notorious foreign location'.³ He rightly stressed the importance of the Lucianic *Erotes*,⁴ where the interlocutor Lycinus compares himself to Aristides being charmed by Milesian tales, for the conclusion that 'Aristides' work was in some sense a first-person narrative with Aristides reporting tales that had been told to him'.⁵ The passage is important enough for our understanding of *Milesian Tales* to merit citation in full:

Ἑρωτικῆς παιδιᾶς, ἐταῖρέ μοι Θεόμνηστε, ἐξ ἑωθινοῦ πεπλήρωκας ἡμῶν τὰ κεκτηκότα πρὸς τὰς συνεχεῖς σπουδὰς ὧτα, καὶ μοι σφόδρα διψῶντι τοιαύτης ἀνέσεως εὐκαιρος ἡ τῶν ἱλαρῶν σου λόγων ἑρρῦή χάρις· ἀσθενῆς

¹ Bowie 1996. ² Bürger 1892b. ³ Harrison 1998b: 64.

⁴ For arguments in favour of the ascription of the Ἑρωτες to Lucian, see Jope 2011. Most scholars have questioned this work's attribution to Lucian in the manuscript tradition or left the matter open (e.g. Mossman 2007).

⁵ That Aristides' work also included events that he claimed himself to have witnessed (as suggested e.g. by Ruiz Montero 1996: 62) has less support from our testimonia.

γὰρ ἡ ψυχὴ διηνεκοῦς σπουδῆς ἀνέχεσθαι, ποθοῦσι δ' οἱ φιλότιμοι πόνοι μικρὰ τῶν ἐπαχθῶν φροντίδων χαλασθέντες εἰς ἡδονὰς ἀνίεσθαι. πάνυ δὲ με ὑπὸ τὸν ὀρθρον ἢ τῶν ἀκολάστων σου διηγημάτων αἰμύλη καὶ γλυκεῖα πειθῶ κατεύφραγκεν, ὥστ' ὀλίγου δεῖν Ἀριστείδης ἐνόμιζον εἶναι τοῖς Μιλησιακοῖς λόγοις ὑπερκεκλούμενος, ἄχθομαί τε νῆ τοὺς σοὺς ἔρωτας, οἷς πλατὺς εὐρέθης σκοπός, ὅτι πέπαυσαι διηγούμενος.

Lucian (?) *Erotes* 1

With amorous sport, my friend Theomnestus, you have since dawn filled my ears which were exhausted by continuous attention to labour, and for my intense thirst for such relaxation the charm of your hilarious stories flowed out at just the right time. For the mind is feeble in its tolerance of continuous labour, and toils that aim at distinction long for short periods of release from burdensome cares and for pleasurable relaxation. So at the break of day the seductive and sweet persuasion of your licentious narratives wholly overcame me with delight, so that I almost thought I was Aristides being entranced by Milesian tales, and I am aggrieved, I swear by your *Loves*, by which you have been identified as an easy target, that you have stopped narrating.

Harrison also discussed the second passage in Ovid's *Tristia*⁶ and, while leaving it open whether *historiae turpis inseruisse iocos* referred to writing both *Milesiaka* and a serious history (*historia*),⁷ or to the insertion of lewd tales in a narrative framework, the whole constituting Milesian tales, he strongly favoured the latter interpretation.⁸ He supported this choice by a discussion of two well-known inserted tales in the *Satyricon*, the Pergamene boy (85–7) and the widow of Ephesus (111–12), and by Apuleius' reference in the opening of his *Metamorphoses* to Milesian *sermo*, to the Milesian origin of his character Thelyphron (2.2.1), and to his self-description as 'the founder of the Milesian' (*Milesiae conditor*) in the tale of Cupid and Psyche (4.32). I find almost all of his argumentation persuasive, though given the paucity of our evidence any reconstruction is inevitably fragile. It is attractive, as he suggests, to suppose that Milesian tales were in some way taking off serious ethnographic writing, and that they involved a narrating character reporting stories he claimed to have heard concerning events and *mores* in Miletus. But the idea that this character represented himself as a traveller⁹ is largely dependent on retrojection from traveller-listeners in Petronius and Apuleius, and the scenario imagined by Walsh (largely following Schissel)¹⁰ in which the framework was a symposium cannot be rejected quite as confidently as it was by Harrison on the ground either of

⁶ Harrison 1998b: 65.

⁷ The view of Walsh 1970: 10–18.

⁸ Harrison 1998b: 65–7.

⁹ Harrison 1998b: esp. 71.

¹⁰ Schissel von Fleschenberg 1913: 94–105.

absence of evidence for a sympotic frame or that a work exceeding thirteen books in length would be too long for such a structure.

Two under-exploited straws may be added to the few already used:

First, the emphasis in the *Erotes* on the charm (χάρις) of the narrator's tales (εὐκαιρος ἡ τῶν ἱλαρῶν σου λόγων ἑρρύη χάρις . . . τοῖς Μιλησιακοῖς λόγοις ὑπερκελούμενος) might be taken to support Walsh's proposed sympotic frame, since self-reflexive praise of their charm is a feature of sympotic works. But it is certainly not unique to them, and cannot shift the weight of argument far.

Second, and perhaps more telling, the early history of prose ethnographic writing starts with a figure not mentioned by Harrison: Hecataeus, precisely of Miletus. We should ask whether the perhaps pseudo-ethnographic Milesian tales of Aristides were in some way cleverly inverting the pattern of one of Miletus' few non-philosophical candidates for literary fame in the archaic and classical periods. If so, it may be worth registering that although the numerous if mostly exiguous fragments of Hecataeus' two-book *Travel about the world* (Περίοδος γῆς) nowhere explicitly introduce the author as an eye-witness or as hearing an account from another witness – unlike poetic predecessors such as characters in the *Odyssey*, Mimnermus (fr. 13 West), and Aristeas of Proconnesus,¹¹ and unlike his (in some sense) successor Herodotus – it seems very probable from Herodotus' account of Hecataeus offering his genealogy to the priests at Egyptian Thebes (and getting his come-uppance) that his presentation of Egypt included at least one incident in which he was a listening character.¹² And even if he visited only some of the places that his work catalogued he must have travelled widely, as is indicated by his characterisation as a 'much-travelled man' (ἀνὴρ πολυπλανής) by Agathemerus.¹³ Thus it can very tentatively be claimed that if Aristides' intertexts included the Milesian Hecataeus' *Travel about the world* then this offers some support for the hypothesis that

¹¹ For Aristeas' citation of a witness, see fr. 5.1–2 Bernabe: καὶ φάσ<αν> ἀνθρώπους εἶναι καθύπερθεν ὁμύρους | πρὸς Βορέω. For possible characterisation of his own response as a *soi-disant* eyewitness, see fr. 11.1–2 Bernabe: θαῦμ' ἡμῖν καὶ τοῦτο μέγα φρεσὶν ἡμετέρησιν. | ἄνδρες ὕδωρ ναίουσιν ἀπὸ χθονὸς ἐν πελάγεσσι . . . Proconnesus was an offshoot of the Milesian colony Cyzicus: the extent to which first the hexameter travel narrative of Aristeas and then the encyclopaedic gazetteer of Hecataeus were stimulated and facilitated by a network of Milesian colonies is a topic that cannot be pursued here.

¹² πρότερον δὲ Ἑκαταίῳ τῷ λογοποιῶ ἐν Θήβῃσι γενεηλογήσαντί [τε] ἑωυτὸν καὶ ἀναδήσαντι τὴν πατρίην ἐς ἑκαταδέκατον θεὸν ἐποίησαν οἱ ἱρέες τοῦ Διὸς οἶόν τι καὶ ἐμοὶ οὐ γενεηλογήσαντι ἐμεωυτόν, Hdt. 2.143. It is of course possible that the work Herodotus uses here was not Hecataeus' *Travel about the world* but his *Genealogies*.

¹³ *Geog.* 1.1 = Hecataeus *FGrH* 1T12a.

his Milesian tales exploited the figure of an eagerly (or perhaps sometimes sceptically) listening traveller.

In 2004 Jensson returned to a position near to that of Bürger, arguing for a close similarity between Encolpius' narrative *in personis* and the sort of narrative which is described as *heard* by the character Aristides in the Ἑρωταί ascribed to Lucian. To me he seems to exaggerate the closeness of these two texts. The narrative of Encolpius has many incidents in which he is a major player: by contrast the narrative offered to Theomnestus by Lycinus is no more than a frame – a sophisticated frame, as Simon Goldhill has expounded,¹⁴ but a frame in which Lycinus himself is never actually the protagonist of a story. This leads me to conclude that if there was a 'Greek original' for Petronius' *Satyrika* it was not straightforwardly a Milesian tale or collection of Milesian tales such as the work entitled *Erotes* evokes.¹⁵

Our understanding of this family of genres was slightly advanced by the publication in 2006 of an Oxyrhynchus papyrus offering a fragmentary prosimetric narrative of a sexual encounter between a woman and an ass. The question naturally arose whether this fragment was part either of the *Metamorphoses* summarised by Photius and ascribed to Lucius of Patrae or of the ass tale (*Lucius or the Ass*) transmitted in the Lucianic corpus. Regine May has argued that it is not, chiefly on the ground that in the Lucianic *Ass* (as in the related narrative of Apuleius 10.22) the ass seems to be represented as hesitant about his penetration of the woman, whereas in the Oxyrhynchus papyrus text it is the woman who, albeit excited, seems to be more hesitant.¹⁶ May proposed that the papyrus actually gives us a part of Aristides' Milesian tales, corresponding to fr. 10 Bücheler of his Latin translator, Sisenna, *ut eum paenitus utero suo recepit* ('when she had received him deep into her womb'), often seen as an intertext with Apuleius' *totum me prorsus, sed totum recepit* ('[she] admitted me absolutely all the way', *Met.* 10.22, cf. εἴσω ὅλον παρεδέξατο, *Onos* 51).¹⁷

If either Jensson or May is right, these Μιλησιακοὶ λόγοι now appear to have been in at least some cases prosimetric. With only one fragment of Aristides' Greek text identified¹⁸ and only ten fragments of Sisenna

¹⁴ Goldhill 1995: 102–9.

¹⁵ In Bowie 2007 I explore the possibility that Antonius Diogenes preceded and influenced the *Satyrika*.

¹⁶ May 2010 on *P.Oxy.* 4762.

¹⁷ Tim Whitmarsh points out to me that the fact that the scene in *P.Oxy.* 4762 is described in the third person rather than the first lends further support to May's claim that it is not directly related to the *Ass* traditions (fundamentally built on the paradox of a first-person narrative delivered by a (one-time) dumb beast).

¹⁸ Quoted by Harpocration Δ 23 δερμηστής: Λυσίας ἐν τῷ πρὸς Εὐπίειθον. Δίδυμος μὲν ἀποδίδωσι τὸν σκώληκα οὕτω λέγεσθαι τῷ Σοφοκλεῖ ἐν Νιόβῃ, ἐν ζ' τῆς ἀπορουμένης λέξεως, Ἀρίσταρχος δὲ

surviving, it is not easy to control this hypothesis. Two of the Sisenna fragments could be from the end of a hexameter: fr. 1 *nocte vagatrix*, and fr. 3, *eamus ad ipsam*. But if Aristides' collection *was* prosimetric then we must concede that no hint of this emerges either in Ovid's mentions of Aristides (cited above) or in the Lucianic *Erotes* – nor, for that matter, in the *Metamorphoses* ascribed to Lucius of Patrae or in the Lucianic Ὀνος.

The possibility that Milesian tales were prosimetric re-opens the question of the classification of the Iolaus narrative published in 1971.¹⁹ Is this too part of a Milesian tale? Its crude presentation of sex (well reflected in Stephens and Winkler's translation of δόλωι . . . βινεῖν as 'crafty fuck')²⁰ would support such a categorisation. The location of the incident described in our papyrus fragment is unclear. It may be noted that the name Iolaus is twice attested in Miletus, once in Colophon and once in Teos,²¹ and Nico once in Miletus,²² but the name Iolaus is not distinctively rare, Nico relatively common.

Impact on Greek and Latin novels

The impact of Milesian tales on the Latin novels has already been apparent in the course of my attempt to pin down the characteristics of the genre. A major problem in reaching any conclusion on either of these problems remains our uncertainty on how far either Petronius or Apuleius was unconsciously or (more probably) consciously departing from what each knew to be the pattern of Milesian tales. The prominence of magic and the supernatural in Apuleius' tale of Thelyphron of Miletus, for example, has encouraged Harrison to see these as generic markers: but they are not appropriately categorised as ἀκολασία ('obscurity'), and it may be that Apuleius is leading his reader to expect a sexually entertaining story by giving Thelyphron Miletus as his origin and then defeating such expectations by diverting along a different generic path.

τὸ Σοφόκλειον ἐξηγούμενος τὸν ὄφιν ἀπέδωκε. μήποτε δὲ μᾶλλον ἂν εἶη ὅστις τὰ δέρματα ἐσθίει δερμηστής, ὡς ὑποσημαίνεται καὶ ἐν τ' Μιλησιακῶν Ἀριστείδου.

¹⁹ Parsons 1971, definitive publication Parsons 1974. Text, translation and discussion Stephens and Winkler 1995: 358–74 (with an important discussion of the implications of its prosimetric form, now needing revision after publication of the ass papyrus, at 363–6); translation and brief discussion Sandy 1989.

²⁰ Stephens and Winkler 1995: 371.

²¹ Record of grant of citizenship to Iolaus of Adramytteion and Seleuceia; 188/7 BCE: *Milet* 1 3, 49; *SEG* 37.985; record of grant of citizenship to Habrotera of Euromos, daughter of Iolaus, 57/6 BCE: *Milet* 1 3, 59; with the Ionian spelling Ioleos (Ἰόλεως) at Colophon, *Corpus Inscriptionum Regni Bosporani* 248; a list of names at Teos including an Iola(u)s, *SEG* 2.581, col. 2.8.

²² As *stephanephoros*, *Milet* 1 3, III.

Petronius' Ephesian widow had been a less substantial modification. As is often noted,²³ Ionia seems to have had a reputation for sexual laxity, and we sometimes encounter slippage from Miletus to Ionia as a whole, which may early have acquired a dubious reputation for sexual licence. The sexually explicit poetry of Hipponax, certainly known in late fifth-century Athens (cf. Ar. *Frogs* 661), could well have contributed to such a reputation, and likewise in the late fifth century we hear Aristophanes' Agathon saying:

σκέψαι δ' ὅτι
Ἴβυκος ἐκεῖνος κἀνακρέων ὁ Τήιος
κἀλκαῖος, ὅππερ ἀρμονίαν ἐχύμισαν,
ἐμιτροφόρουν τε καὶ διεκλῶντ' Ἴωνικῶς.²⁴
Aristophanes, *Thesmophoriazousae* 160–3

That famous Ibycus and Anacreon of Teos
and Alcaeus, who gave their harmony taste,
wore headbands and ponced around in the Ionian style.

The reputation persists into the Hellenistic and Roman periods. In Herodas *Mimiambos* 7 the month Taureon points to Ionia as the setting for the ladies' dildo-buying expedition (7.86). Indecent dancing is still associated with Ionia in the late first century BCE,²⁵ and Plutarch's account of the discovery of a copy of Aristides' *Milesiaca* in the baggage train at Carrhae slips from that to the issue of *hetairai* from Ionia. The association resurfaces in the late second-century authors Lucian, Pollux and Athenaeus.²⁶

So Petronius' relocation of the central character and incident from Miletus to Ephesus may be an almost trivial *variatio* (though of course it remains possible that the Milesian tales of Aristides already moved beyond Miletus itself). It is, at the same time, an interesting *variatio*, since the shift involves a Romanisation of the incident (a microcosm of the *Satyrical*'s Romanisation of Greek genres as a whole), moving it from a city with a long Hellenic pedigree and a lesser role in the Roman province Asia, Miletus, to one that was now the province's capital, residence of the Roman *proconsul* who was its governor, and that had a social mix in which the descendants of Italian

²³ E.g. Trenkner, Harrison 1998b. See further below p. 250, and Tagliabue in this volume.

²⁴ διεκλῶντ' is a conjecture: the MSS read κἀχλίδων.

²⁵ Nisbet and Rudd 2004: 106 on Horace *Odes* 3.6.21–2 *motus doceri gaudent Ionicos | matura virgo*.

²⁶ ἦν δέ τις καὶ Ἴωνικὴ ὄρχησις παροινίος, Ath. 14.629e; the Ἴωνικὸν was danced by Sicilian Greeks according to Pollux 4.103 (τὸ δ' Ἴωνικὸν Ἀρτέμιδι ὠρχοῦντο Σικελιώται μάλιστα), but Luc. *De salt.* 34 takes the παροινίος to be Phrygian (ἐκεῖνο τὸ Φρύγιον τῆς ὄρχήσεως εἶδος, τὸ παροινίον καὶ συμποτικόν, μετὰ μέθης γιγνόμενον ἀγροίκων πολλάκις πρὸς αὐλήμα γυναικεῖον ὀρχουμένων σφοδρὰ καὶ καματηρὰ πηδήματα, καὶ νῦν ἔτι ταῖς ἀγροικίαις ἐπιτιολάζοντα).

settlers bulked large (and where of course Roman soldiers would be more often visible).

More blurring of boundaries may be involved in the tale of the Pergamene boy. Pergamum was not in Ionia,²⁷ and it was only the provincial structure after the area had been bequeathed to Rome in 133 BCE by the last Attalid (ruling precisely in Mysian Pergamum) that might seem to give Pergamum a similar profile to Ephesus and Miletus. Thus, despite the Greek names and apparent ethnic identity of narrator and character, the tale of the boy to some degree Romanises the Greek genre.

Similar apparently conscious adaptations of Milesian tales (and perhaps of their congeners) may be proposed for some Greek 'ideal' novels.

A palmary case is that of Dionysius of Miletus in Chariton. Handsome, rich, noble, pious, educated, generous – he has all the qualities we might expect to be lacking in figures in Milesian tales. Similarly the heroine Callirhoe, albeit coming near to a Milesian-tale fate when the robbers decide to sell her, conducts herself throughout her Milesian adventure with dignity and good judgement. That good judgement leads her to accede to Dionysius' insistence that she marry him, but her decision-making and its outcome are given an entirely different colour from those of Petronius' Ephesian widow.

Another species of discreditable tale is evoked by the false identity claimed for Callirhoe by the robber Theron – she is alleged to have been the slave of a Sybarite woman whose jealousy her beauty aroused (1.12.8). Readers know as well as Callirhoe herself that she is no character in a Sybaritic tale, and the claim that she is, despite an anachronism puzzling even in the mouth of an uneducated robber, may be partly calculated to let us measure the distance between Chariton's narrative and a Sybaritic tale.

Xenophon's opening of his story in Ephesus might raise expectations in some readers that they would encounter a narrative tinged with Ionian licence. But we soon discover Ephesus and its citizens to be moral and pious, even if Habrocomes is fatally haughty in a Hippolytean vein, a piety that is confirmed when the oracle at 'Colophon', i.e. Claros, is consulted and its commands are executed.²⁸ That Claros, not the Milesian oracle at Didyma, is chosen might signal the writer's rejection of a Milesian narrative texture.

²⁷ Pace Harrison in Morgan and Harrison 2008: 233.

²⁸ Xen. *Eph.* 1.6.1–7.2.

Two other Greek cities were also traduced in irresponsible fictional writing – Rhodes (in the *Rhodian affairs* of Philip of Amphipolis)²⁹ and Tarentum (to judge from Juvenal, who links it with Sybaris, Rhodes and Miletus).³⁰ Rhodes plays a key role in Xenophon's story of his couple's travels and reunion, but like his Ephesus it is a place of religious cult not of immorality. Tarentum has also an important place in Anthia's adventures: it is here that she is sold by Rheneia's slave Clytus to a brothel-keeper and risks subjection to a life of prostitution.³¹ Did Xenophon expect his readers to recognise an inverted 'Tarentine tale'?³²

A self-styled widow from Ephesus, Melite, reappears in Achilles Tatius. Despite her passion for the hero Cleitophon and the lengths to which it drives her, she is a much more complex and sympathetic character than Petronius' widow. By contrast her returning husband Thersander is unrestrained in the violence of his actions and of his invective, while his own early life is alleged by the priest of Artemis (a man with a developed skill in Aristophanic rhetoric)³³ to have been devoted to serial affairs with older men. Miletus is nowhere mentioned in Achilles Tatius' novel, but the defamatory and abusive rhetoric provoked by the debate over the behaviour of Melite and Cleitophon evokes a world and a discourse familiar to some readers (certainly some in second-century Oxyrhynchus) from the seamy iambic poetry of the sixth-century BCE Ephesian Hipponax. If *Milesiaca* exploited a broader landscape of a sexually self-indulgent Ionia, we might suppose that the concentration of these features in the Ephesian denouement of Book 8 is an author's re-configuration of the Milesian tale's generic features.

One might expect none of this in Heliodorus, whose characters' adventures never take them into or even very near to Ionia, and whose narrative's principal intertexts are epic and tragedy.³⁴ But both false and 'true' stories in Heliodorus introduce Ionia. First in Book 1 we encounter a false tale told by Charicleia to her captor Thyamis: she and Theagenes, she alleges, are brother and sister from a noble family in Ephesus, she a priestess of

²⁹ Φίλιππος, Ἀμφιπολίτης, ἱστορικός. 'Ροδιακὰ βιβλία ιθ'. ἔστι δὲ τῶν πάνυ αἰσχυρῶν, Suda 4.724.25ff Adler.

³⁰ *nullum crimen abest facinusque libidinis ex quo | paupertas Romana perit. hinc fluxit ad istos | et Sybaris colles, hinc et Rhodos et Miletus | atque coronatum et petulans madidumque Tarentum*, Juv. 6.294–7.

³¹ Xen. *Eph.* 5.5.7; Anthia remains in Tarentum until 5.11.1.

³² I am reluctant to extend the boundaries of Milesian tales to include any *anilis fabula* γράωδης μῦθος as suggested by Ruiz Montero 1996: 63, adducing particularly the Tarsian tale of Anthia told by Chryson at Xen. *Eph.* 3.9.8.

³³ ἦν δὲ εἰπεῖν οὐκ ἀδύνατος, μάλιστα δὲ τὴν Ἀριστοφάνους ἐξηλωκῶς κωμωδίαν, Ach. Tat. 8.9.1.

³⁴ But for importance of New Comedy for Cnemon and his narrative, see Bowie 1995.

Artemis, he a priest of Apollo.³⁵ This is several removes from a Milesian tale, but that the Ionian link makes some literary contribution is suggested by its second appearance. In Book 7 the two young pre-pubescent slaves whom Arsace has assigned to minister to Theagenes and Charicleia are Ionians (Hld. 7.19, 8.9), and of these two the girl nobly takes the blame for Arsace's poisoning in an attempt to save Charicleia (Hld. 8.9). A reader familiar with the Ionian of Milesian tales and of the rhetoric in Achilles Tatius Book 8 might see that here, as in so many other ways, Heliodorus is elevating the character and behaviour of types encountered in earlier prose fiction, both 'ideal' and 'Milesian'.

Beginnings

How early can Milesian tales be traced back? Fifteen years ago I suggested that Aristides put together his work shortly before the Latin translation of Sisenna,³⁶ and hence around 100 BCE. But there is really no evidence for Aristides' date, just as there is no evidence concerning where he was writing. It might well be Athens. Recent studies of the population of Athens in the first century BCE and the first two centuries CE show that there was a strikingly high percentage of Milesians there from around 100 BCE.³⁷ It is just as likely that Aristides was writing there, or in the largest and most prosperous of the cities of the area that from 129 BCE had been the Roman province 'Asia', Ephesus, as that he was writing in the smaller city of Miletus. But even were we able to determine the date of Aristides' work or the place of its composition, there are hints that the tales he assembled might well have had a generic existence long before he used them to create his literary work.

Some help can be sought from the apparently related genre of Sybaritic tales, Συβαριτικοὶ λόγοι. These are explicitly linked with Milesian tales by Ovid *Tristia* 2.413–8 and perhaps implicitly by Plutarch's mention of Sybaris in his *Crassus* 32.5–6 (both cited above p. 243). 'Sybaritic tales' can be traced back as far as Aristophanes' comedy *Wasps*, first performed in Athens in early spring 422 BCE (at the *Lenaea* of the archon year 423/422), but since the south Italian city of Sybaris was destroyed in 510 BCE it is virtually certain that the genre goes back at least a century before that. To judge from utterances by Aristophanes' characters, in the 420s these tales were defined by being *about* somebody from Sybaris. Thus after Bdelycleon,

³⁵ Hld. 1.22.2.

³⁶ Bowie 1996.

³⁷ Vestergaard 2000, 81–110.

instructing his pro-Cleon father how to conduct himself appropriately in an upper-class symposium, has very ill-advisedly told him to handle complaints by telling witty stories, ἄστεϊοι λόγοι, whether Aesopic or Sybaritic (1259–1260), the drunken Philocleon tries to dismiss a citizen who wants to charge him with *hybris* by beating him up and telling two appropriate Sybaritic stories.

- Κατήγορος: σὺ λέγε. δικῶν γὰρ οὐ δέομ' οὐδὲ πραγμάτων.
 Φιλοκλέων: ἀνὴρ Συβαρίτης ἐξέπεσεν ἐξ ἄρματος,
 καί πως κατεάγη τῆς κεφαλῆς μέγα σφόδρα·
 ἐτύγχανεν γὰρ οὐ τρίβων ὦν ἵππικῆς.
 κᾶπειτ' ἐπιστάς εἶπ' ἀνὴρ αὐτῷ φίλος· 1430
 “ἔρδοι τις ἦν ἕκαστος εἰδείη τέχνην.”
 οὕτω δὲ καὶ σὺ παράτρεχ' εἰς τὰ Πιττάλου.
 Βδελυκλέων: ὅμοιά σου καὶ ταῦτα τοῖς ἄλλοις τρόποις.
 Κατήγορος: ἀλλ' οὖν σὺ μέμνησ' οὗτος ἀπεκρίνατο.
 Φιλοκλέων: ἄκουε, μὴ φεῦγ'. ἐν Συβάρει γυνή ποτε 1435
 κατέαξ' ἐχῖνον.
 Κατήγορος: ταῦτ' ἐγὼ μαρτύρομαι. 1436bis
 Φιλοκλέων: οὐχῖνος οὖν ἔχων τιν' ἐπεμαρτύρατο· 1437
 εἶθ' ἡ Συβαρίτις εἶπεν, “αἱ ναὶ τὰν κόραν
 τὰν μαρτυρίαν ταύταν ἐάσας ἐν τάχει
 ἐπίδεσμον ἐπρίω, νοῦν ἂν εἶχες πλείονα.”
 Aristophanes, *Wasps* 1426–40

- Plaintiff: Tell me: for I have no wish for court cases or trouble.
 Philocleon: A Sybarite fell from his chariot,
 And somehow sustained a great crack on his head –
 for he happened to be no expert in horsemanship.
 And then a friend came up to him and said
 ‘Each man should practise the trade he understands’.
 And so you too should run along to Pittalus’ clinic.
 Bdelycleon: This too is just like your other behaviour.
 Plaintiff: Whatever, will you please remember what this
 man’s answer was.
 Philocleon: Listen, don’t run away. In Sybaris a woman once
 cracked her little pot.

Plaintiff: I ask you to bear witness to this.
 Philocleon: So her little pot kept asking somebody to bear witness to it.³⁸ Then the Sybarite woman said 'If, by the Daughter goddess, you had abandoned this attempt to get a witness and had quickly bought a bandage, you would have had more sense'.

The tales both concern Sybarites. The first is about a Sybarite man (ἄνθρωπος Συβαρίτης, 1427–31), the second about a woman located in Sybaris who must surely also be supposed to be from Sybaris (1435–40). Each tale seems to have a punch line, meant to be funny, which Philocleon adapts to his objective of seeing off the accuser. The first has no apparent sexual content; the second does so only if one takes the ἐχῖνος ('little pot') which the woman in Sybaris breaks to be an obscene sexual double entendre – an interpretation I have often toyed with but by which I am not wholly convinced.³⁹ Of course it may not have been an essential feature of what Aristophanes' audience and later Greeks took to be Sybaritic stories that there should be a punch line – this could be a twist or selection by Aristophanes to suit his own dramatic purpose. Certainly the stories of the bizarre and self-indulgent behaviour of Sybarites told by Aelian do not in the same way depend on a verbal punch line, at least as he transmits them.⁴⁰ But if there *was* usually a punch line, then both in this respect, and in the fact that a sexual theme was *not* obligatory, Sybaritic stories seem to have had a different texture from Milesian.

³⁸ I have offered a translation of a line that seems to make little sense: more probably the text should read τὸν ἐχῖνον οὖν οὐχ ὡς τιν' ἐπεμαρτύρατο, 'so the man who owned the little pot asked somebody to bear witness'.

³⁹ For the frequent use of the names of containers of various shapes as *double entendres* for female genitals, and for the possible place of ἐχῖνος ('little pot') in this category, see Henderson 1975: 142 under his number 161. Another possible case is Archilochus fr. 201 W, cf. da Cunha Corrêa 2001 and 2010.

⁴⁰ Σμινδυρίδης ὁ Συβαρίτης ἐς τοσοῦτον τρυφῆς ἐξώκειλε (καὶ γὰρ τοὶ Συβαρίταις πᾶσιν ἔργον ἦν τρυφᾶν καὶ τῷ βίῳ διαρρεῖν, ὁ δὲ Σμινδυρίδης καὶ πλέον). φύλλοις ῥόδων γοῦν ἐπαναπεσῶν καὶ κοιμηθεὶς ἐπ' αὐτῶν ἐξανέστη λέγων φλυκταῖνας ἐκ τῆς εὐνῆς ἔχειν. σχολῇ γ' ἂν οὗτος ἐπὶ χαμέυνης κατεκλίθη ἢ στιβάδος ἢ πόας ἐν προσάντει πεφυκυίας ἢ ταύρου δορᾶς, ὡς ὁ Διομήδης, πρεπούσης στρατιώτῃ σκληρῷ καὶ γενναίῳ 'ὑπὸ δ' ἔστρωτο ῥινὸν βοῦς ἀγραύλοιο', Ael. VH 9.24 (Smindyrides is otherwise known as a suitor of Cleisthenes' daughter Agariste from Hdt. 6.127.1, saying of him ὅς ἐπὶ πλείστον δὴ χλιδῆς εἰς ἀνὴρ ἀπίκετο); Συβαρίτης ἀνὴρ παιδαγωγὸς (καὶ γὰρ οὖν μετὰ τῶν ἄλλων Συβαριτῶν καὶ αὐτοὶ ἐτρυφῶν) τοῦ παιδός, ὃν ἦγε διὰ τῆς ὁδοῦ, ἰσχύδι περιτυχόντος καὶ ἀνελομένου, ἐπέπληξεν αὐτῷ ἰσχυρότατα· γελοιότατα δὲ αὐτὸς τὸ εὔρημα παρὰ τοῦ παιδός ἀρπάσας κατέτραγεν. ὅτε τοῦτο ἀνελεξάμεν ἐν ἱστορίαις Συβαριτικαῖς, ἐγέλασα· ἔδωκα δὲ αὐτὸ ἐς μνήμην, μὴ βασκήνας διὰ φιλανθρωπίαν γελάσαι καὶ ἄλλον, Ael. VH 14.20.

It seems probable that, unlike *Milesiaca*, Sybaritic stories were not collected until shortly before Ovid composed *Tristia* 2.417–18:

Nec qui composuit nuper Sybaritica fugit,
nec qui concubitus non tacuere suos.

Nor did the man who recently composed Sybaritic tales go into exile,
Nor the ones who did not keep silent about their own liaisons.

The way Ovid tries to use this datum also suggests that by the Roman imperial period Sybaritic stories had acquired a marked sexual orientation that they may not already have had in the fifth century BCE.

If Sybaritic stories can be traced back in some form to the fifth or even sixth century BCE, might this also have been true of Milesian tales? Two very slight indications might suggest that this could have been so.

First, Aristophanes twice picks out Miletus as the principal source of dildos for Athenian ladies, in *Lysistrata* and in a fragment from an unknown play:

ἀλλ' οὐδὲ μοιχοῦ καταλέλειπται φεψάλυξ.
ἐξ οὗ γὰρ ἡμᾶς προὔδοσαν Μιλήσιοι,
οὐκ εἶδον οὐδ' ὄλισβον ὀκτωδάκτυλον.
Aristophanes, *Lysistrata* 108–10

But not even a glimmer of an adulterer has been left behind.
And indeed from the moment the Milesians abandoned us,
I have not even set eyes on an eight-finger dildo.⁴¹

τί ἐστι τοῦθ' ὃ λέγουσι τ[ὰς Μιλησίας
παίζειν ἐχούσας, ἀντιβολῶ, [τὸ σκύτινον;
Aristophanes, fr. 592.16–17 Kassel-Austin⁴²

What is that thing that they say the women of Miletus
have in their hands when playing around, please tell me, the leather thing.

The second of these texts seems explicitly to represent the women of Miletus as indulging in recreational sex with dildos – I say 'seems', because 'women of Miletus' (Μιλησίας) is a supplement, albeit one that has been widely accepted.

Second, there is the matter of Pericles' non-citizen partner, Aspasia, who was of course from Miletus. What we find in such acts of mockery as Dicaeopolis' speech in Aristophanes' *Acharnians*, where two of Aspasia's

⁴¹ Henderson 1971: 81 *ad loc.* expresses surprise at the shortness of 'eight-finger' dildos. Lateral thinking suggests that the thickness, not the length, of the device is in question.

⁴² *P.Oxy.* 2 (1899) no. 212 = D. L. Page *Greek Literary Papyri* 1941 no. 44.

pornai are claimed to be responsible for the outbreak of the Peloponnesian war, can only be a small sample of what was being said or sung about Aspasia in the symposia and other private gatherings in Athens of the 430s and 420s:

κᾶθ' οἱ Μεγαρίης ὀδύναις πεφυσιγγωμένοι
 ἀντεξέκλεψαν Ἀσπασίας πόρνας δύο·
 κἀντεῦθεν ἀρχὴ τοῦ πολέμου κατερράγη . . .

Aristophanes, *Acharnians* 525–7

And next the Megarians, garlicked up in agony,
 stole in reprisal two of Aspasia's prostitutes:
 and it was from this that the beginning of the war burst forth . . .

So far as I can discover no extant testimony links Aspasia and dildos. But of course Aspasia had her pick of Athenian elite men, so perhaps she never resorted to a dildo. Taken together, however, I suggest that these two sets of data make it quite likely that Milesian tales, in which some sexual element was part of the laws of the genre, *scritti* or *non scritti*, were circulating in the last three decades of the fifth century. One might even guess that the mention of Aspasia and her (perhaps) Milesian prostitutes might for some members of the audience have marked Dicaeopolis' account of the war's outbreak as a comic variation on a Milesian tale.

Conclusions

It remains the case that very little about Milesian tales can be said with certainty. There was a Greek genre with that name and the work of its most famous exponent, claiming the name Aristides, was circulating by the early first century BCE in time to be translated into Latin by the historian and *praetor* of 78 BCE Sisenna, and was in the headlines a quarter of a century later when discovered by Parthians in the Roman baggage train after the battle of Carrhae in 53 BCE. The content could be described as lascivious (ἀκόλαστος or *turpis*). Both Aristides' work and Sisenna's translation could be assumed by Ovid to be known to some of the readers of his *Tristia* (between 9 and 12 CE), and the former was among the wide range of texts cited by the mid-second century lexicographer Valerius Harpocration in his *Lexicon of the Ten Orators*, albeit only once, but attesting at least six books. Fragments of Sisenna show that his translation ran to at least thirteen books.

Thereafter all is speculative reconstruction. I have argued that Milesian tales were most probably a collection of short narratives about people or

incidents in or linked to Miletus, perhaps extending more widely into adjacent parts of Ionia, whose attraction was their amusing rendering of disreputable sexual behaviour, and which may well not have regularly ended with a verbal punch line such as was perhaps a feature of the related genre of Sybaritic tales. In his work Aristides probably presented himself as a narrator passing on stories he had heard from others and, although he may have represented himself travelling to Miletus or more widely in Ionia, he need not have done, nor have we any indication that he represented himself as a protagonist in any of his stories. That is not to say this posture can be confidently excluded, any more than the suggestion that these tales were marked by a proclivity towards magic and the supernatural. But whereas it is clear that Milesian tales had important influence on aspects of the form and content of both Petronius' *Satyricon* and Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*, the ideas that Milesian tales already exploited a narrating protagonist (as argued by Jensson) or displayed a sensationalist interest in magic (as argued by Harrison) should not be treated as more than possibilities. Nor is my suggestion that pseudo-ethnographic features in Aristides evoked the *Travel about the earth* (Περίοδοι γῆς) of Hecataeus of Miletus anything more than a possibility.

It also now seems to be a possibility, following the publication in 2006 of the papyrus with an apparently prosimetric ass-tale similar to that found in the *Lucius or the ass* and used by Apuleius, but different in some details, that some Milesian tales were prosimetric, and that in turn re-opens the question of the genre of the Iolaus narrative first published in 1971. Did it (too?) come from a collection of Milesian tales?

I have drawn attention to some details of the Greek ideal novels which might be seen as predicated on a readership's knowledge of a genre of Milesian tales, details which most often show the novelist drawing attention to his distance from their literary level. Much more could be done, but the traps are numerous.

I have also put forward a hypothesis about the earlier history of Milesian tales, suggesting that they may already have circulated in later fifth-century Athens, as Sybaritic tales certainly did, and that Aristophanes allows us to infer their exploitation of Milesian dildos and of the high-class *hetaira* Aspasia of Miletus. Whereas papyri may be hoped to resolve some of our many uncertainties about Milesian tales in the Hellenistic and Roman periods, my hypothesis about their fifth-century prehistory is almost certain never to be confirmed.

PART V

Transmission and Reception

Does triviality translate? The Life of Aesop travels East

Pavlos Avlamis

The *Life of Aesop* is a work directed towards a narrative scrutiny of *bios* not only as biographical text but also as everyday life. From its opening words, ‘Aesop, the most useful in all aspects of life, the fabulist’ (ὁ πᾶντα βιωφελέστατος Αἰσωπος, ὁ λογοποιός, G 1), the cultural domain of *bios* and its literary expression are foregrounded. The structure of the work, the way it was read and reconfigured by its scribes in its long and complicated paths of manuscript dissemination, as well as its themes and the way they engaged the identity of their educated readers – the *Life’s* meaning, in short, gravitates towards the expression of a here-and-now, concrete and bottom-up dimension of everyday urban experience.¹ A central trope that the *Life* deploys to invoke and create this sense of the everyday is through a thematic dialogue between the ordinary and the extraordinary, the domestic and the foreign. In the various redactions of the Greek *Life of Aesop* the alien and fantastical places, times and tropes of the narrative created an aesthetic hybrid in combination with the narrative sections of low, everyday realism, which afforded a novel view of the trivial and the quotidian. What I want to follow in this chapter is how the centrality of this dialectic between the trivial and the exotic persevered through linguistic and cultural re-encodings in the Late Antique translations of the *Life* into Syriac and, further afield, into Uyghur (a Turkic language of central and eastern Asia).

The travails of triviality are a matter of importance. Post-colonial translation studies in the last two decades have highlighted the problematic ethics and politics involved in translating texts across languages and cultures with

¹ I am adapting here a definition of the ‘everyday’ from Lefebvre 2002: 47, ‘A mixture of nature and culture, the historical and the live, the individual and the social, the real and the unreal, a place of transitions, of meetings, interactions and conflicts, in short a *level* of reality’ (italics original). On the influential post-war French critical tradition on the everyday, see below. The everyday, by this definition, is a *way* of social experience that is anchored to the micro-level of reality and to a local point of view: Lefebvre 2002: 118–42; and Smith 1987: 99–100.

a power differential.² This theoretical discourse has put forward a variety of resistant and counter-hegemonic tactics in which translators can conceive of and problematise power inequalities between the source and target languages and cultures of translated texts. The rationale in making the translator's mediation obvious and in resisting smooth and 'naturalised' renderings is that, when texts are translated from subaltern, marginal, or colonised languages into hegemonic ones (mainly English), the 'invisibility' of the translator helps perpetuate the sense that hegemonic norms and languages are better or that they are natural and universal, that they are simply without alternative. As is to be expected, scholars of translation studies approach the dynamics at play in cultural difference primarily from a linguistic point of view. Thus, when Lawrence Venuti sees a moral advantage in 'foreignising' translations over 'domesticating' ones, he is envisaging a range of linguistic choices through which the translator can upset the normative and fluent structures of the sentence. His ethical choice is to use language as that textual dimension whose alien-ness can supplant the smooth and untroubled signifying patterns of the domestic, the familiar and the expected.³

In a broader sense, then, at the heart of the politics of cultural transcoding lies the problem of the everyday: that domain of social experience which is defined by its being taken for granted within a given culture and which perseveres largely unnoticed. If triviality and everydayness constitute the micro-level of a culture's norms and structures, it is this very domain of life against which the 'domestic' or 'alien' effects of a translation are measured. Venuti's dualism between the foreign and the domestic effects of translation will help me frame the terms of my present inquiry, as it foregrounds the narrative interaction between the trivial and the exotic, an opposition that was especially important in the ancient reception of the *Life of Aesop*.

There is however an important way in which Venuti's polarity will require an *a priori* redefinition for my purposes here. In the case of the *Life of Aesop* we are approaching a text, which in itself *thematizes* the importance

² Cf. Rafael 1988; Bassnett and Lefevere 1990 and 1998; Cheyfitz 1991; Robinson 1991, 1997a and 1997b; Niranjana 1992; Venuti 1995 and 1998; Bassnett and Trivedi 1999; Chaudhuri 1999; Tymoczko and Gentzler 2002.

³ Venuti 1995, especially 148–86 on foreignism in the contemporary North American context, as well as 99–147 and his view of Schleiermacher's preference for foreignising translation as a type of universalism in the service of nationalism within its nineteenth-century German context. Thus, for Venuti, political context informs the cultural hierarchy at play in the contrast between the domestic and the foreign; I will discuss briefly the Uyghur political context in the present article, but I am looking at a different side of the domestic/foreign dichotomy in translation that is complementary to and not mutually exclusive with Venuti's position. See also Venuti 1998, which extends his argument about the contemporary cultural politics of translation.

of the clash between the everyday and the exotic as a way of examining *bios*. Taking the foreign and the domestic in a narrative as thematic figurations requires a broader view of language in these translations. The sentence and the micro-level of the text cannot be the beginning and end of an approach to the ethics of textual translation; we also need to follow larger thematic structures. Of course, narrative themes are a matter of language, too. As such, they are caught up halfway in between the open nature of linguistic signification and the social determination of culture. By claiming, as I will, that themes can travel from Greek to Syriac to Uyghur with similar narrative functions, I am not also embracing a supposed universality of textual meaning.⁴ There are, however, certain specific aspects of cultural similarity and continuity between Greek, Syriac and Uyghur through which narrative themes can resonate with audiences in similar ways, and I will return to such elements of common cultural grammar below. Before I turn to the eastern translations of the *Life of Aesop*, what I have briefly sketched as the dominant aesthetic tropes of the Greek narrative and its everyday realism requires some unpacking.

The Greek *Life* and the endotic

The posthumously published volume *L'infra-ordinaire* of the novelist Georges Perec brings together prose vignettes of everyday life with the author's influential theoretical approaches to how one can go about writing down the trivial.⁵

How should we take account of, question, describe what happens every day and recurs every day: the banal, the quotidian, the obvious, the common, the ordinary, the infra-ordinary, the background noise, the habitual?

To question the habitual. But that's just it, we're habituated to it. We don't question it, it doesn't question us, it doesn't seem to pose a problem, we

⁴ Such universals in translation have rightly been criticised as rigid humanist constructs that occlude the contestations and the heterogeneity within and between languages and cultures. See e.g. Niranjana 1992, who combines deconstruction with post-colonial critique to emphasise the multiplicity and hybridity within and between cultures over overarching ideal and transcendental truths; see especially her attack on the 'transcendental signified' (55–9), and more generally 1–86 and 163–86. Chaudhuri 1999 is also concerned with the post-colonial politics of translation and equally sceptical of the truth-content of language (43), yet he allows for a range of translation practices that can also communicate a narrative theme, what the text is 'about' (36–43), e.g.: 'Clearly, I am stressing the consistently metalingual function of translation. Whatever a translated text might be "about", it is always *simultaneously* about itself, about the working of language within it, on a plane that the original text was not' (41, my italics emphasising the coexistence of narrative theme and textual self-referentiality in a translation).

⁵ My italics. Quoted from the English translation in Perec (1999) 210.

live it without thinking, as if it carried within it neither questions nor answers, as if it weren't the bearer of any information. This is no longer even conditioning, it's anaesthesia. We sleep through our lives in a dreamless sleep. But where is our life? Where is our body? Where is our space?

How are we to speak of these 'common things', how to track them down rather, flush them out, wrest them from the dross in which they remain mired, how to give them a meaning, a tongue, to let them, finally, speak of what is, of what we are.

What's needed perhaps is finally to found our own anthropology, one that will speak about us, will look in ourselves for what for so long we've been pillaging from others. Not the exotic any more, but the *endotic*.

Perec's call for a new discovery of the everyday is part of a broader twentieth-century concern with grasping, articulating and reclaiming the marginalised field of the everyday in modern western life.⁶ A prominent influence on Perec – as well as, more generally, on the vast philosophical, sociological and literary critical output on everyday life that followed the Second World War – has been Henri Lefebvre's *Critique de la vie quotidienne*.⁷ Lefebvre's concern was the constitution of a radical philosophy that could undo the pathology of the experience of everydayness in capitalist modernity, which he saw in stark contrast to a pre-modern situation in which value cohesion among individuals and localised traditional lifestyles of production defined a more coherent and uniform social experience.⁸ A central focus of Lefebvre and others writing on the everyday in this period was the recovery and transformation of the alienated field of the modern everyday by grasping its internal rhythms, its fleeting sense and its revolutionary potential for a bottom-up resistance to authoritative discourses and structures of power from above. It is in this sense that Lefebvre, and Perec with him, saw something particularly pernicious in literary

⁶ I have found particularly helpful the introductions, surveys and bibliographies of twentieth-century critical thought on the everyday in Gardiner 2000, Highmore 2002a and 2002b, and Sheringham 2006. For Perec's position in the French critical tradition on the everyday, see Sheringham 2006: 248–91, and more specifically 250–7 for Perec's personal connection to Henri Lefebvre and Roland Barthes.

⁷ In three volumes: vol. I published in 1947 and in a significantly expanded second edition in 1958; vol. II in 1967; and vol. III in 1981. References here follow the English translation.

⁸ For a critique of this type of historicising in sociological theory, see Crook 1998. Even Henri Lefebvre, who denounced such a clear-cut before/after historical scheme in the 1958 foreword to the second edition of his *Critique de la vie quotidienne* vol. I (=Lefebvre 1991: 57–8; cf. 2002: 129–30), would intermittently fall back on this type of historicising (cf. e.g. Lefebvre 1987). I am borrowing the term 'premodern condition' from Holsinger 2005, who focuses on the paradigm of the Middle Ages to explore the idealised functions that the premodern world played in twentieth-century critical imagination.

tropes that transformed the quotidian and restored the trivial to visibility through defamiliarisation and distance. Lefebvre's main target was the Surrealists, whom he saw as the heirs of a nineteenth-century bourgeois insistence on approaching reality through a dialectic between the marvelous and the everyday.⁹ And Perec's contrast between the exotic and the endotic, in the passage quoted above, makes this distinction: the written expression of everyday experience should not speak about the identity of the reader and the author through juxtapositions with the exotic, through voices, tropes and viewpoints that are external to the flow of everyday life.

If we consider the literary expression of the everyday as a narrative figuration of a local level of social experience, then we can see that the narrative scrutiny of the ordinary that Perec was after existed in various forms in Greek antiquity, although often precisely through the dialogue between the endotic and the exotic that the French novelist rejected. The mixture of adventurous and everyday-life narrative is one of the central elements in Bakhtin's category of the ancient 'adventure novel of everyday life', with which the *Life of Aesop* shares many features.¹⁰ The longest part of the narrative, the string of episodes that take place on Samos (chs. 20–100), offers an organically interconnected series of situations of quotidian urban experience. Aesop's character, like Apuleius' Lucius, offers an 'outsider within' view of this urban world as a slave, a rogue and a paradoxographer of the ubiquitous. All this unfolds before the reader's eyes, while Aesop moves through the narrative, weaving in and out of a world of streets, houses, symposia, the agora, the bathhouse, the seafront, the town suburbs and the theatre.¹¹ These backdrops invoke for the educated reader a sense of local town life, but a sense of the local that is abstract, without specific details.¹²

⁹ See especially Lefebvre 1991: 103–29. For a more nuanced and sympathetic take on the Surrealist project with regard to the everyday, see Highmore 2002a: 45–59, and, especially, Sheringham 2006: 59–133. Sheringham's book in particular is especially sensitive to how the mediation of language, literature and art comes into play in the various attempts of subsequent theorists to resist the Surrealist defamiliarising look at the everyday and to grasp the experience of the everyday not from without but from within.

¹⁰ Bakhtin 1981: 111–29. For an application of the Bakhtinian chronotopes of the 'adventure novel of everyday life' to the *Life of Aesop*, see Avlami 2011, where I analyse more fully the contrasts of the Greek *Life* between the ordinary and the extraordinary. Of course there was an intense and diverse negotiation of *bios* in ancient Greek writing more generally of which this particular narrative trope is only one aspect. For example, the Hellenistic and Roman philosophical writings concerned with the scrutiny of the self did so largely through attention to the cultural sphere of the everyday; see e.g. Foucault 2000; Gill 2006: 408–61; Sorabji 2006.

¹¹ On the narrative viewpoint of the rogue, see Bakhtin 1981: 158–67, as well as 98, 119–29, and 243–5, on the *Life's* road-trip temporality (the chronotope of the road).

¹² The way the *Life's* realism relays the sense of the local then fits into a 'translocal' perspective encouraged by the existence of the empire, on which see the various chapters in Whitmarsh 2010a and below.

The *Life's* polis is a generic polis for the most part, transferable across readers, even while the scrolls switch hands and travel, and the copyists labour away along the paths of the text's geographical dissemination. But, at the same time, the polis of the *Life* is the familiar made strange, and this way of paying attention to the everyday operates on various levels of the text.

A central aesthetic component of the *Life's* realism is Aesop's theriomorphic appearance, with a long description of which the work begins: 'The fabulist Aesop, the great benefactor of mankind, was by chance a slave but by origin a Phrygian of Phrygia, of loathsome aspect, hideous in the extreme, potbellied, misshapen of head, snub-nosed, mumbling, swarthy, stunted, bandy-legged, weasel-armed, squint-eyed – the blunder of a dozing Prometheus. In addition to this he had a defect more serious than his unsightliness in being speechless, for he was dumb and could not talk.' (Ch. 1).¹³ The fabulist's appearance, like his slave status, sets him at a distance from the flow of the urban life that he is critiquing, from the polis, its social conventions and its quotidian language.¹⁴ At the same time Aesop's theriomorphy also performs a metanarrative function. It embodies the very hybrid aesthetic of the beast fable that combines the animal as a defamiliarising figuration and the human as the allegorised common ground of experience.¹⁵ In this respect, the *Life* is typical of ancient literary biography, conflating the idea and function of the author with the aesthetics of the work; the *Life of Aesop* is a biography of the fabulist and the fable at the same time. A similar narrative function is performed by a host of trivial objects that populate the narrative. Their organic incorporation in a biography of

¹³ I am adapting here Perry's text according to the emendations of Papademetriou 1991–1992: 153–6 and 159–68 (English summary: 189–92). These corrections ought to be standard; they make much better sense (in terms of palaeography and context) of the corrupt readings in the G recension (cod. 397 of the Pierpont Morgan Library in New York). Thus the emended text reads: 'Ὁ πάντα βιωφελέστατος Αἰσωπος, ὁ λογοποιός, τῇ μὲν τύχῃ ἦν δοῦλος, τῷ δὲ γένει Φρυγίας· κακοπινῆς τὸ ἰδέσθαι, εἰς περισσεῖαν σαπρός, προγαστρωρ, προκέφαλος, σιμός, σόρδος, μέλας, κολοβός, βλαισός, γαλεάγκων, στρεβλός, νυστάζοντος Προμηθέως ἀμάρτημα. πρὸς τούτοις ἐλάττωμα μείζον εἶχε τῆς ἀμορφίας τὴν ἀφωνίαν· ἦν δὲ καὶ νωδὸς καὶ οὐδὲν ἡδύνατο λαλεῖν. I have adapted accordingly the translation by L. W. Daly reprinted in Hansen 1998. For words like σόρδος (=Latin *surdus*), see Perry 1939, for a glossary of addenda to the *LSJ* (not yet incorporated) that derive from the G recension of the *Life of Aesop* as well as from the other works contained in the Morgan Library manuscript mentioned above.

¹⁴ On the large issue of the slave's narrative perspective explored for a learned elite audience, I can only point out here that in the context of the *Life of Aesop* it also enters the same pattern of the defamiliarising dialectic between the ordinary and the alien. See also the more general discussions in Fitzgerald 2000, with a brief analysis of the *Life* in 26–7; McCarthy 2000; cf. also Hopkins 1993.

¹⁵ On this see especially Patterson 1991: 13–43; and Kurke 2011: 2–4, 40–2 and 159–201. For this tendency in Greek literary biography, the *locus classicus* is M. Lefkowitz 1981. More generally, on the connection between Greek constructions of 'Aesop' and the generic identity of the fable, see West 1984; Schaeffer 1985; Duprat 2001; J. Lefkowitz 2008. On Aesop's theriomorphy, see Papademetriou 1997: 13–42; Lissarague 2000a and 2000b.

Aesop and his world is particularly evident in ch. 87, where the fabulist appears before the theatre of Samos to interpret an omen. The Samians are taken aback with Aesop's appearance and they heap derogatory metaphors on him: 'What a monstrous face! He is a frog, a galloping pig or a jug with a hernia or a sergeant of monkeys or a painted flask or a cook's utensil-box or a dog in a basket.'¹⁶ Here the narrative's serio-comedy deploys two figures of the everyday as Aesop's alter ego. Alongside the animal similes that feed off Aesop's affinity to the world of fable, the Samians also make us see in Aesop's bodily form a series of trivial objects attached to the everyday rhythms of urban life, *bios* as domestic life and as the repetitive materiality of food.¹⁷ The lowly, incidental object is characteristic of Aesop's brand of wisdom, as Leslie Kurke has eloquently shown recently, and as it was beautifully encapsulated in an influential early modern German engraving of Aesop in the 1476/7 Johannes Zeiner edition, in which a disfigured Aesop stands speaking against a background of fable animals, objects, and scenes forming a fragmentary patchwork of the Aesopic narrative world.¹⁸

These uncanny incongruities that are inherent in the imagination and the poetics of fable and are embodied by Aesop are given an exotic source in the *Life*. Preceding the Samos section, the narrative begins with a series of episodes in which Aesop advances from the world 'out there' to the 'here and now' of the Greek polis. He starts off as a mute farm slave in an unspecified location, is then sold off to a slave-trader and travels towards increasingly recognisable areas: Asia, Ephesus and Samos. Central among the adventurous and exotic elements of this introductory narrative of becoming is the epiphany of Isis (chs. 4–8), who heals Aesop from his muteness and unleashes the powers of the Aesopic view of life. The *Life* 'biographises'

¹⁶ τὸ τέρας τῆς ὄψεως αὐτοῦ! βάτραχος ἐστίν, ὥς τροχάζων, ἢ στάμνος κήλην ἔχων, ἢ πιθήκων πριμιπιλάριος, ἢ λαγυνίσκος εἰκαζόμενος, ἢ μαγείρου σκευοθήκη, ἢ κύων ἐν γυργάθῳ (87).

¹⁷ This is not the only instance of this type of joke on Aesop's appearance. Everyday food vessels take on the same role in ch. 14, when Aesop's first master decides to sell him off and a passing slave-trader sees him and exclaims: 'This is the trumpeter from the battle of the cranes and pygmies. Is he a reed-whistle or a man? If he did not have a voice, I'd say he was a cauldron or a food jar or a wide bowl.' The presence or absence of voice from these objects, which is the central organising principle in the slave-trader's Rabelaisian fantasy, approximates the fundamental incongruity that underlies the kind of fiction of the beast fable: a magical world, often displaced in a past 'age of Cronus', in which animals, plants and men spoke alike (cf. Babrius Prol. 1). Note that I am adapting here the Greek text Perry's edition of G 14, with the emendations proposed by Papademetriou 1991–1992: 168–70 (in modern Greek) and 189 (A.4) (English summary); and Stamoulakis 1991–1992: 32–7 and 40 (no. 2). Thus the text reads: οὗτος τῆς γερανομαχίας σαλπιστὴς ἐστίν. οὗτος βοιζοκάλαμος ἐστίν ἢ ἀνθρωπος; οὗτος εἰ μὴ φωνὴν εἶχεν, εἰρήκειν ἂν ὅτι ἢ χυτρώπους ἐστίν ἢ ἀγγεῖον τροφῆς ἢ ἔχινος.

¹⁸ Kurke 2011: 191–201, on Aesop as *bricoleur*. On Zeiner's Ulm edition of Heinrich Steinhöwel's translation of Aesop's fables (and its influence in the early modern European dissemination of Aesopic fable), see Dicke 1994; Papademetriou 1997.

the fable as a hybrid mixture of the concrete and the fantastical and at the same time translates this polarity in terms of space: Aesopic wisdom, Isiac divinity, the countryside and the geographical margins combine and juxtapose the world of Samos. In this spatial metaphorical mapping of the trivial and the exotic, the *Life* follows a recurring dimension in imperial Greek conceptions of the fable. Rhetoricians who provide a theory of fable like to draw genealogies that emphasise the foreign and hybrid sources of the genre placed at the edges of the Greek world.¹⁹

The contrast between the exotic introductory section of the *Life* and the endotic episodes of Samos is reprised in the narrative. The Samos section is followed by Aesop's involvement with kingly contests in Babylon and Egypt (chs. 101–23).²⁰ Finally, we return to the Hellenic world and Delphi for the final act and Aesop's death (chs. 124–42). Following the fate of these larger structural and thematic sections in the notoriously open manuscript tradition of the work we can also see that the scribes' way of reading and copying the *Life* focused largely on the everyday themes and elements of the story. Oppositions of endotic and exotic themes structure the text in alternating sections, which also influenced the way the scribes appropriated the text, copying more faithfully and retaining the distance of their exemplar in the alien and adventurous sections of the work, while changing the parts of the text that narrated the everyday and absorbing them in the here-and-now temporality of their writing.²¹

The projection of Aesop's defamiliarising wisdom onto alien and distant locations (real and metaphorical) is a Greek way of thinking about the poetics of fable, the paradoxical construction of the everyday world through the juxtaposition of the concrete 'here-and-now' against the exotic and the fantastical. This pattern of representation is not, however, simply and narrowly a self-reflexive literary ploy or a self-conscious metanarrative. Kurke has shown that the dynamics between a local community and its real and metaphorical 'beyond', as well as the skilled individuals who negotiate or travel between the two, are central aspects of the non-philosophical type of traditional wisdom that the figure of Aesop came to represent in the Greek tradition. At the same time, they are also part of a very broad and common cultural rationale that the anthropologist Mary Helms has traced across a wide variety of cultures.²² It is of specific interest to me here that

¹⁹ Aelius Theon *Prog.* 72–3 Spengel; [Hermog.] *Prog.* 1; Aphth. *Prog.* 1.

²⁰ This is an adaptation of the story of Ahiqar, on which see further below.

²¹ Perry 1933 and 1936: 1–70 gives a detailed account of the fluctuations of the *Life*. I have discussed briefly the thematic reasons for this scribal tendency in my 2011 article and I am preparing another publication exclusively dedicated to the scribal poetics at work in the *Life*'s various recensions.

²² Kurke 2011: 95–115, drawing on Helms 1988 and 1993.

Helms' study covers Central Asian cultures and shows that there was a Eurasian cultural continuum with respect to the valuation of the exotic, whether geographical, cosmic or spiritual.²³ Now it is time to turn to how the Greek *Life's* themes and structures were received by their non-Greek scribes and readers.

Aesop on the Silk Road

In 1922 the German explorer Albert von Le Coq published a series of fragments of Manichaean texts discovered in the German archaeological expeditions to the Tarim basin along the ancient trade routes of the Silk Road, in what is nowadays the Xinjiang Uyghur region of China. Among the fragments edited and translated by von Le Coq, there were the remains of a ninth-century CE book in codex format found in the ancient town of Qočo and written in Uyghur language, bearing a title in red ink on the top margin: 'The good and beautiful book of Yosipas'.²⁴ The text was written in the Manichaean Uyghur script, which indicates a monastic milieu of Manichaeans for the transcription and circulation of the text – Manichaeism having been adopted since the middle of the eighth century as the religion of the Uyghur ruling elite.²⁵ In the text it is clear that the character of Yosipas speaks to a group that is entertained and praises him

²³ Helms 1988: 103–5 and 1993: 85–7. On the related issue of common traits between Greek and Indian models of sacred peregrination, see Rutherford 2000 with my discussion of *Āranyakā* below.

²⁴ Von Le Coq 1922: 33 fr. 14. An English translation of this fragment can be found in Klimkeit 1993: 312–13. The Sogdian fable that Klimkeit is referring to is the one discussed in Henning 1945: 474–5, and corresponds to Greek fable 81 Perry (=83 Hausrath=38 Chambry); this fable was not embedded in the *Life*, as Klimkeit seems to suggest. For an account of the second and third German expeditions to the Turfan oasis (1904–7) see von Le Coq 1928. Hopkirk 1980 offers a very readable, if not strictly scholarly, history of these highly controversial European expeditions to the Tarim basin. Confusingly, on account of the various languages of the area, the various ways of transcribing local names in European languages, and the long and complex history of Chinese Central Asia, the town of Qočo will also be found in secondary literature written as Chotscho, Kocho, Kaochang, Gaochang and Karakhoja. For the Uyghur kingdom of Qočo that flourished between the mid-ninth and the mid-thirteenth centuries CE, see Hamilton 1955, especially 1–18 and 127–9, who surveys the historical evidence in Chinese documents (n.b.: in Hamilton's account the kingdom of Qočo is referred to by its Han name, Si'tcheou); von Gabain 1961 and 1973; Mackerras 1990. Regarding the title in red ink at the top of the page in von Le Coq's fragment of the Uyghur *Book of Yosipas*: the fragment corresponds to chs. 47–8 of the Greek *Life of Aesop*, but it has become obvious now that preceding sections of the Greek *Life* were also part of the Uyghur *Book of Yosipas*. In this sense, this title in all likelihood does not mark the beginning of the narrative but must be a running title of the type that was used in Turkic Manichaean pothi (palm-leaf) books; see von Gabain 1950a: 8–9; Whitfield and Sims-Williams 2004: 122 with n. 19). Note however that the book preserving the Uyghur *Book of Yosipas* is not a pothi book, but a Western-type codex. On the Silk Road Aesop fragments, more generally, cf. also Tardieu (2002–2003).

²⁵ For the palaeographical context of Uyghur texts from the period, the varieties of Uyghur scripts and Uyghur literature more generally, see von Gabain 1950a, 1964a and 1964b; Bombaci 1964; Clark

for his wit. Yosipas then proceeds to explain why it is that pigs squeal when they are taken to the slaughter, while sheep remain calm. Von Le Coq identified Yosipas with Aesop and concluded that the fragment corresponded to an Aesopic fable.²⁶ It was the Hungarian Turkologist László Rásonyi Nagy who, a few years later, identified the fragment as an Uyghur version of chapters 47–8 of the Greek *Life of Aesop*, in which Aesop, during his stay at Samos in the service of the philosopher Xanthus, wins the approval of his master's learned circle, the σχολαστικοί ('intellectuals'), by exhibiting his wisdom at a symposium.²⁷ Rásonyi Nagy argued, furthermore, that between the Greek *Life* and its Uyghur version there had been an intermediary Syriac translation some time during the seventh or eighth century CE, which explains how the name of Aesop that was regularly translated as Iosipos in Syriac, eventually became the Yosipas of the Uyghur Manichaean fragment.²⁸ In 1959, Ben Perry published a very long and learned article on the Late Antique cross-cultural migrations of books and narratives in the broad storytelling continuum that stretched from Byzantium to India. Perry made the observation that there is evidence of a possible Persian translation of the *Life of Aesop* that may have been one of the intermediaries between the Greek and the Uyghur versions of the narrative.²⁹

1997. For the Manichaean script specifically in this text, see von Gabain 1964a: 178; Zieme 1968: 46 with n. 10. On the introduction of Manichaeism in Central Asia and the Uyghur kingdom of Qocho, see Lieu 1992: 219–42 and 1998: especially 76–97; Clark 2000 and 2009; Foltz 2010: 70–84.

²⁶ Von Le Coq 1922: 3 with n. 2, where he identifies the fable with Syriac fable 66 in Landsberger 1859: 119–21.

²⁷ Rásonyi Nagy 1930.

²⁸ Rásonyi Nagy 1930: 440–3, also pushing back the date of the earliest Syriac translations of Aesopic fables to the seventh or eighth century CE. On Aesop and the Syriac rendering of his name as 'Iosipos', see also Lefèvre 1941: iii–v, as well as xxxi–xxxiii with xxxii n. 2 (concerning the Syriac translation of 'Aesop' as 'Sophos'); and Perry 1952: 518 and 522.

²⁹ Perry 1959: 21 and 31 with n. 62 makes the argument that the invaluable tenth-century literary history *Fihrist* of al-Nadīm in chapter 8, section 1 offers a catalogue of Persian books of fiction in which a 'book of Yosipas and Xanthos' is mentioned. Such a title would approximate the ms. title in the G recension of the Greek *Life* 'βίβλος Ξάνθου φιλοσόφου καὶ Αἰσώπου δούλου αὐτοῦ· περὶ τῆς ἀναστροφῆς Αἰσώπου'. Since Uyghur Manichaean monasticism was heavily influenced by Sogdian Manichaeism, a succession of Syriac, Persian, Sogdian and Uyghur translations would not be improbable. Note, however, that in Dodge's edition and translation of the *Fihrist*, a very different reading of the Persian book title is given (Dodge 1970: 11.715). Cf. also Perry 1959: 13 n. 26 for an alternative possibility of what a book of Iosipos/Yosipās could be: an encounter between Aesop and King Nebuchadnezzar. In the case of both the *Life of Aesop* and Aesopic fable collections, a Syriac translation would probably underlie this Persian version, as is the case with the later Arabic versions. On Syriac fable collections, see Lefèvre 1941, as well as the Syriac collection written in Hebrew characters in Landsberger 1859; see also the discussion in Perry 1952: 511–23, and Adrados 2000: 403–28. On the Arabic Luqmān material and its importance for the Syriac tradition, see below n. 40.

In 1968 Peter Zieme identified, edited and published a further eight fragments of the Uyghur *Book of Yosipas* with German translation.³⁰ In the order of Zieme's numbering, the correspondences that he proposed between Uyghur fragments and the Greek *Life* are:³¹

Fr. 1, recto: chs. 12–16; verso: ch. 16 (Aesop travels towards Ephesus in a slave trader's convoy). As far as I can judge, this fragment could also correspond to chapters 2–4 of the Greek *Life* (the trial of the fig-eaters).³²

Fr. 2: Zieme could not identify a parallel. A correspondence to chapters 14–20 (the slave trader's convoy) is possible.³³

Fr. 3, recto: ch. 66; verso: ch. 67 (Aesop goes to the bathhouse in town to see if there is a crowd; Aesop tells Xanthus a fable of scatological aetiology). This fragment includes a name that occurs also in frs. 6 and 7: Kidinus. He is the Uyghur reincarnation of Aesop's master Xanthus.³⁴

Fr. 4, recto: ch. 64. Fr. 4 verso, actually corresponds to ch. 66, one of a few episodes in the Greek *Life* that dramatise the everyday rhythms of the polis through the bathhouse.³⁵

Fr. 5: no parallel.

Fr. 6, recto: chs. 84–5. In this part of the narrative, the polis of Samos depends on the wisdom of Xanthus as a philosopher to explain an ominous portent. Xanthus despairs and tries to hang himself at night.³⁶ The verso preserves a radically new storyline. Such innovations in the various

³⁰ Zieme 1968; cf. also Zieme 1971. In writing the article Zieme had the expert advice of Ben Perry, the American classicist whose monumental work on the *Life* and fables of Aesop remains indispensable.

³¹ Chapter numbers for the Greek *Life* follow the standardised numbering of Perry's 1952 edition. For the correspondences between the Greek and Uyghur versions, see Zieme 1968: 47–8.

³² In Zieme's translation (49–50) there is a mention of someone being very hungry, as well as a mention of intestines. It could be that the Greek parallel is chapters 2–4, in which Aesop turns the tables on his fellow slaves that accuse him of having eaten his master's figs. Aesop has everyone drink warm water and the truth comes up: his accusers ate the figs.

³³ Zieme 1968: 50. Fr. 2 recto l. 2: 'Es wurde ohne Mehl' and l. 3 'Wegen der Speisen und Getränke' might have something to do with Aesop's trick in chs. 14–20. Aesop, having been sold off by his first master to a slave trader, travels towards Ephesus with a group of slaves. In the division of labour among the slaves, Aesop chooses to carry the enormous bread-basket for his fellow slaves. At first, they think him stupid, but as they travel and the slaves keep eating, the bread-basket gradually becomes empty and light, and Aesop proves his wisdom.

³⁴ Cf. Zieme 1968: 48 with n. 24 and Perry's hypothesis about the transformation of Xanthus' name.

³⁵ Zieme 1968: 47 identifies (in error) both verso and recto of the fragment as corresponding to ch. 64. Alternatively, Zieme's fr. 4 could possibly correspond to the sequence of chs. 38–40, in which Aesop explores the semantic ambiguities of Xanthus' orders and gives him a lesson by pouring him to drink a cup of water from the bathtub: cf. Zieme 1968: 51–2 fr. 4 verso ll. 4 and 5 (ll. 81–2 in the translation: 'Wasserbehälter . . . Wasserbehälter').

³⁶ Zieme 1968: 52–3. Zieme identified the Uyghur passage on the recto as chs. 84–5, because the Uyghur text mentions someone's promise to relieve somebody from their troubles, while there is also a mention of Kidinus/Xanthus doing something at night (Zieme 1968: 52–3 fr. 6 recto ll. 4–5, and ll. 105–6 in translation). Such narrative elements occur in chs. 84–5 of the Greek *Life*, in which Aesop prevents Xanthus from hanging himself at night and promises to help him with the difficult

redactions and translations of the *Life of Aesop*, as I mentioned above, are by no means rare.³⁷ The new subplot seems to involve a slave-girl with the name Aranyaka, to whom I will return.

Fr. 7, recto: ch. 38; verso: ch. 54. Zieme's identification is uncertain, especially since the plotline is innovative in obvious ways. Xanthus has fallen ill and a doctor gives him a drug. After he recovers there is mention of dancers making their appearance in what is possibly a mime spectacle. None of this narrative occurs in the Greek *Life*; it seems to be an altogether new episode.

Fr. 8: A new episode. A scribe is mentioned. The slave-girl Aranyaka seems to be about to be sold off, while there is a mention of a seaside location, which would definitely be an exotic locale for a Central Asian Uyghur reader in the Turfan oasis.

Finally, in 2000 Jens Wilkens re-edited the fragments providing new readings of the previously edited fragments, while he also added two further fragments to our knowledge of the Uyghur *Life*. Furthermore, Wilkens argued that a third new fragment belonged to the same codex; this fragment contains a different text. In other words, the manuscript that contained the *Life of Aesop* was a miscellaneous codex. The other text included in the codex was an Uyghur version of the narrative cycle of *Kalila wa-Dimna*.³⁸ Such

task of interpreting the omen for the *demos* of Samos. However, the mention in the same Uyghur fragment of a 'brave hero' implies an Uyghur reconfiguration of the storyline. We may have one of the many innovations that the *Life of Aesop* has undergone in its various recensions and translations. The quality of heroic bravery and its narrative possibilities are more generally not in accord with the general tenor of the *Life*, as we know it in the Greek tradition. The proximity of this passage on the recto with the evidently new episode of Āranyakā (on which see below) on the verso seems to imply an altogether innovative storyline on this page of the *Book of Yosipas*.

³⁷ Besides the rewritings of the *Life* throughout its Greek transmission, cf. the Bulgarian *vita* published by Syrku 1884, which is preserved in a late sixteenth- or early seventeenth-century miscellaneous codex. This Bulgarian translation derives from the Greek *Life* but with drastic abbreviation, invention and syncretism of traditions: Aesop is made a Cappadocian; Saracen pirates abduct him (a novelistic motif) and sell him off in Constantinople; King Lycorus of Babylon, whom Aesop serves in the Greek *Life* (chs. 101–123), is fused here with the unnamed intellectual of chapters 68–74, who traps Xanthus into placing a wager as to whether he could drink the sea dry. This hybrid invented character assumes a new (and surprising) identity drawn from Byzantine legend: his name is Digenis Akritas, the celebrated hero of Byzantine epic.

³⁸ Wilkens 2000: 15–16 and 61–3 (frs. 34–36). Note that Wilkens describes fr. 34 as a possible Aesopic fable, which would imply that the Uyghur miscellany was similar to the Greek MS. 397 of the Pierpont Morgan Library, containing both the *Life* and a collection of fables of Aesop. However, Wilkens' conjecture that this is an animal fable is based on the fact that the fragment mentions a donkey. Mentions of donkeys either in embedded fables or as part of the narrative frame recur in the *Life of Aesop* itself: Aesop is given voice and begins naming what he sees, including a donkey (ch. 8); the incurious old man speaks to his donkey (59); in the fable of the foolish daughter, Aesop relates the scene of a man raping a donkey (131); Aesop relates to the Delphians the fable of the old farmer's trip to the city on a carriage driven by donkeys (140). In other words, fr. 34 might be another part of the *Book of Yosipas*.

manuscript coexistence of the *Life of Aesop* with other narrative material related to fable or to entertaining seriocomic wisdom was also common in the Greek tradition and can be seen, for example, in MS. 397 of the Pierpont Morgan Library in New York, which contains the oldest version of the Greek *Life* (G) alongside a Greek version of *Kalila wa-Dimna*, the *Physiologus*, a collection of Aesopic fables, fables of Babrius and a selection of jokes from the *Philogelos*.³⁹

Does this Uyghur translation preserve the Greek *Life*'s attention to everyday life? Do the Greek *Life*'s narrative tropes of expressing and narrating the domain of *bios* survive the long trip to the Tarim basin? The first thing that needs to be noted is that all the identifiable fragments of the Uyghur *Book of Yosipas* seem to focus largely on the narrative material that formed the first two sections of the Greek *Life*: the introductory section, which concerns Aesop's first master, the Isis epiphany and the slave trader, and the second section, which consists of the Samos episodes. Of course, this evidence from the fragments could be an accident of survival, but we also need to take into account that the Samos section is also the part of the Greek *Life* most attested in other pieces of evidence for the eastern translations of the *Life*. The Syriac paraphrase, as I will discuss below, draws its material from the Samos episodes. Similarly, as a consequence of Syriac interest in Aesopic biography and fable, the protean sage of Arabic legend Luqmān was reinvented through the adaptation of new narrative-biographical material in the medieval Arabic tradition. This material, which is heavily indebted to the *Life of Aesop* through a Syriac interface, also draws from the Samos episodes.⁴⁰ The endotic town world of Samos provides the main setting for the translators' creative touches.

³⁹ Perry 1936: 172–3, who gives a sense of the broad variety of such Greek miscellaneous codices; Husselman 1938: 5–11, with a detailed description of MS 397. The Greek translations of the *Kalila wa-Dimna* (on which see Niehoff-Panagiotidis 2003: especially 34–47) show the other direction in which animal fable and relevant literature travelled in the cultural continuum of wisdom in Late Antiquity and the medieval period.

⁴⁰ The Arabic translation of Aesopic fables seems to have passed through Christian Syriac circles: Derenbourg 1850; Heller 1986; Kassis 1999: 47–54. As for the *Life* and its Arabic *Nachleben*, a Syriac translation must have been the conduit for the strong Aesopic traits that the legendary Arab sage Luqmān absorbed in the medieval Arabic tradition. In this sense the Aesopic stories told about Luqmān in medieval Arabic sources reflect the state of the Syriac translation of the *Life of Aesop*. As Heller 1986 points out, influences from the *Life of Aesop* are particularly evident in the stories that present Luqmān as deformed, of dark complexion and as a slave. Heller also alludes to the following narratives: Luqmān serves his master sheep's tongue, as the best thing in life, on the first day, and as the worst thing in life, on the second day (cf. *Vita Aesopi* 51–5); Luqmān reveals that his fellow slaves had eaten the master's figs by having everyone drink warm water (cf. *Vita Aesopi* 2–4); Luqmān releases his master from a wager he had placed that he could drink the sea dry through a contest of *adynata* (cf. *Vita Aesopi* 69–74), on which motif see further in Papademetriou 1989: 71–3 with nn.163–4; Konstantakos 2004 and 2008. The Arabic sources on these narratives of Luqmān

The abstract and generic description of the polis of Samos played a significant role in the way this section was read through the *Life's* long history of Greek transmission and reception. Apparently the *Life's* aesthetics of everyday town life persevered through the *longue durée* without becoming archaic or outdated, partly because very few elements of the narrative anchored the polis of Samos to a specific time and place. In the case of the Asian translations of the *Life*, we cannot tell whether the Samos narrative was transformed in translation with the inclusion of specific locations or other anchoring narrative elements, while the text moved from Greek to Syriac to Uyghur adapting to the new cultural contexts and the local realities of everyday town life. But the Samos section seems to have been the most striking and memorable of the adventures of Aesop/Iosipos/Yosipias for its readers in Syriac and Arabic. In this respect, the Uyghur version, as far as we can tell from the fragments, preserved at least a significant part of the storyline as it stood in its Syriac forebear.

The adventurous counterpoint to the everyday world of Samos, the Aḥiqar section, persevered in the Greek tradition as a fantastical element: exotic, ancient and remote from a Hellenocentric point of view.⁴¹ This section of the *Life of Aesop* was an Asiatic loan into Greek in the first place. It would be interesting to know whether Aesop's Babylonian adventures persevered in the reception of the text as an exotic contrast to the endotic world of Samos, when the *Life* itself began its eastward travel in translation. There is some indication for the opposite: the encounter between Aesop and the fictional Babylonian king Lycorus, as it stood in the Greek *Life*, seems to have been transformed and 'domesticated' in its Syriac reception – to return to Venuti's polarity. Perry pointed out that an account of Syriac origin is preserved in Arabic manuscripts, in which Aesop/Iosipos tells fables to King Nebuchadnezzar. Whether the narrative structure of this Arabic account derives from changes in the storyline of the Syriac translation of

are quoted in Basset 1890: liv–lxix, as well as xlii with the description of Luqmān's deformity. However, Basset's relative chronology is flawed, reflecting the incomplete nineteenth-century state of knowledge about the Greek *Life of Aesop*. Basset thinks that the *Life* is a late Byzantine work by Planudes (fourteenth century CE), hence his remarks on the relation between the Greek *Life* and the medieval Arab scholiasts is outdated. To Heller and Basset's parallels between Aesop and Luqmān I would like to add that the story told about the young man that Luqmān encounters on the road in Basset 1890: lii is adapted from the *Life of Aesop* ch. 25 (with a possible influence from ch. 60), in which Aesop has a very similar conversation with Xanthus on their first encounter. Cf. also Toy 1889; Leroy 1909; Gutas 1981: 57–8.

⁴¹ On the peregrinations of the Aḥiqar story and further bibliography, see Kussl 1992; Oettinger 1992; Greenfield 1995; Marinčič 2003; Konstantakos 2008; Kurke 2011: 176–85. In Avlamis 2011 I delineate briefly the striking divergence in the Greek scribal reception and textual transmission of the *Life of Aesop* between the thematically exotic sections of the Isis epiphany and the Aḥiqar adaptation, on the one hand, and the sections of Samos and Delphi, on the other.

the *Life of Aesop*, or it reflects a prominent dimension of reader-response to this translation, Aesop's peregrination to Babylon is corrected and domesticated in the Syriac context with Lycorus becoming the historical king Nebuchadnezzar, a familiar figure among readers of Syriac.⁴²

Whatever was the case with the Aḥiqar section in the eastern translations of the *Life*, it seems reasonable to deduce from Zieme's fragment 1 (and perhaps fr. 2) that the Uyghur *Book of Yosipas* retained the opening section of the Greek *Life*, which included Aesop's travel with the slave-trader's convoy. This initial section of the *Life* also included the epiphany of Isis, which – significantly – takes place in bucolic displacement away from the polis. It is Isis as a force outside the Hellenic urban world that endows Aesop with his particular brand of wisdom to scrutinise the sphere of the everyday Samian polis through his paradoxical poetics of alienation and defamiliarisation. The exotic, novelistic narrative function of Isis persevered in the way the Late Antique and Byzantine recensions of the Greek *Life* were read: the Christian scribes either retained the pagan otherness of an Isiac epiphany or substituted Isis with the adventurous and novelistic personification of Tychē.⁴³ If this epiphany scene found its way into the Uyghur *Life*, it would be fascinating to know whose epiphany it was and how it was presented, especially since the *Book of Yosipas* was copied in a Manichaean milieu; I will return to this issue of religious relevance.

In other ways the *Book of Yosipas* creates its own contrasts between the everyday and the adventurous that were not in the Greek *Life*. This is particularly evident in the case of the new subplot involving the slave-girl Aranyaka, a glimpse of which we can get from Zieme's fragments 6 and 8. Fragment 6 shows that the Uyghur Aranyaka subplot stands at the end of the Samos cycle of episodes that concern the comic conflicts between the slave Aesop and his philosopher master, Xanthus. At this point, the Greek *Life* switches to a narrative sequence that includes Aesop's manumission and his embassy to Croesus on behalf of the demos of Samos (chs. 81–100), which will eventually lead up to the Aḥiqar section. By contrast, the Uyghur *Book of Yosipas* seems to proceed from a situation in which Xanthus/Kidinus is distressed (fr. 6 recto) to a scene in which Aranyaka makes her appearance and a form of unspoken language involving Aranyaka's hands takes place

⁴² I mean 'appropriated' in the broad sense that Nebuchadnezzar belongs to material that would be familiar to readers of Syriac texts; cf. e.g. the appropriation of Nebuchadnezzar by Christian Syriac authors as discussed in Henze 1999: 143–201 and 2001. Note that according to Perry 1952: 517 with n. 22 part of the fables that Yosipas tells King Nebuchadnezzar derive from a Syriac translation of Greek fables; cf. Adrados 2000: 403–28.

⁴³ On the narrative function of this epiphany in its Greek scribal reception see Avlamiš 2011.

(fr. 6 verso, sign-language? pantomime?). Fragment 8 makes it clear that this subplot involves adventure elements of a novelistic nature.⁴⁴ Aranyaka is probably to be sold off at a place near the seacoast. Reading such narrative motifs in terms of Bakhtin's categories of temporal and spatial narrative tropes, or chronotopes, the *Book of Yosipas* seems to revert in this subplot to the abrupt spatial and temporal disjunctions of the 'adventure novel'.⁴⁵ In this sense, the Uyghur *Book of Yosipas* translates the shift from everyday to exotic chronotopes that we find in the Greek *Life* in the transition from the Samos section to the Ahiqar section, although through a very different narrative and thematic sequence.

There is a further twist to the presence of Aranyaka in the *Book of Yosipas*. Zieme suggested in his edition of the Uyghur fragments that the introduction of a subplot involving a slave-girl named Aranyaka pointed to Indian influence, since the name can be etymologised from the Sanskrit *āranyakā* ('of the forest').⁴⁶ Certainly, cultural influences from India had already by the ninth century a long history of traffic along the Silk Road into the Taklamakan and Lop deserts, and had been integrated into the life of Uyghur communities, as can be seen especially in the case of Buddhism.⁴⁷ Besides, we have already seen that Wilkens' new edition of the fragments shows that narrative material of Indian provenance, deriving from the *Pañcatantra*, had been incorporated in the same codex as the *Book of Yosipas*.⁴⁸ Moreover, there might also be a specific literary pedigree for the new plot that has not been previously noticed and which would have reinforced its aesthetics of alterity and distance. The seventh-century Sanskrit drama *Priyadarśikā* attributed to Harsha, emperor of Northern India, features an intricate romantic plot that involves a case of hidden identity: the protagonist, King Vatsa, falls in love with a servant-girl who

⁴⁴ The narrative conventions of adventure as we know it from the Greek novel (regardless of origin and genealogy) was part of a cross-cultural *koinē* by this period stretching from the Mediterranean to India, cf. Sastri 1960: 130–8; Perry 1959 and 1960; Hägg 1986; Bremmer 1999; Hägg and Utas 2003: 188–212. Another instance and factor in the dissemination of such narrative aesthetics are the erotic and adventurous plots of Sanskrit drama, on which see below. On the related issue of the migration of themes and the relation between Greek and Indian drama, see Keith 1924: 57–68, and 12–77, more generally, as well as 1928: 352–71 (on influences between Greek and Indian literature, more generally); Sastri 1960: 85–118; Shekhar 1960: 53–68; Varadpande 1981: 65–120. Cf. also McEvilley 2002: 349–402 with bibliography.

⁴⁵ Bakhtin 1981: 89–102. ⁴⁶ Zieme 1968: 48.

⁴⁷ On Buddhist religious, narrative and artistic influences into Central Asia along the Silk Road in this period, including Turkic Manichaean communities, see Geissler and Zieme 1970; Härtel and Yaldiz 1982; Klimkeit 1986, 1993, 1998a and 1998b; Laut and Röhrborn 1990; Whitfield 1999; Oda 2003; Porció 2003; Röhrborn 2003; Wilkens 2003; Yakup 2003; Zieme 2003; Whitfield and Sims-Williams 2004; Foltz 2010: 37–58. On Indian settlers in the kingdom of Qocho, see von Gabain 1973: 21–2.

⁴⁸ See above.

was captured by the king's general in a battle against a forest king.⁴⁹ The girl's name is Āraṇyakā, since she was found in the forest; by the end of the play she turns out to be the princess Priyadarśikā, who had been pledged to King Vatsa by her father in the first place. If indeed the play travelled along the Silk Road from Northern India to Uyghur Central Asia, the influence it exerted on the crafting of the new episode in the *Book of Yosipas* may be as superficial and incidental as the mere borrowing of the servant's name.⁵⁰ Whatever the specifics of this Aranyaka subplot may have been,⁵¹ the Indian overtones of the slave-girl's name were deployed in the context of a novelistic narrative and seem to have keyed into the exotic poetics of adventure. Furthermore, even the meaning of the girl's name ('of the forest') fits the exotically extra-urban sphere of adventure that this narrative performs in the storyline of the *Book of Yosipas*.⁵²

⁴⁹ I owe many thanks to Professor Alexis Sanderson of All Souls College, Oxford, who generously pointed out for me this parallel of Harsha's *Priyadarśikā* and its character Āraṇyakā. For an English translation and extensive introductory notes on Harsha's *Priyadarśikā* see Nariman, Williams Jackson and Ogden 1923. Cf. also Kale 1928; Sastri 1960: 85–118. On Harsha's position in the history of Sanskrit drama, see Keith 1924: 170–81, as well as 276–88 on the place of erotic plots in Sanskrit dramaturgy, which may be the relevant backdrop for the introduction of an erotic Āraṇyakā subplot in the *Book of Yosipas*.

⁵⁰ On the short-term afterlife of King Harsha's poetry and its dissemination, see Nariman, Williams Jackson and Ogden 1923: xli–xliii. An apposite parallel of a transcultural borrowing and grafting of merely a name comes from the *Life's* own later protean *Nachleben*: a similarly free combination of narratives and names occurs in the sixteenth-/seventeenth-century Bulgarian version of the *Life of Aesop*, in which the Byzantine epic hero Digenis Akritas gives only his name in the creation of a new character, the king of Constantinople whom Aesop encounters: cf. Syrku 1884; and n. 37 above. Other plot elements may derive very generally from Sanskrit dramaturgy like the apparent poisoning and healing of Kidinus/Xanthus in fr. 7, which is paralleled in the fourth act of the *Priyadarśikā* with the heroine being poisoned and then healed by King Vatsa. For the sign-language of fr. 6 there is a scene of a type of magical pantomime in the first act of Harsha's drama *Ratnāvalī*, in which the magician Samvara-Siddhi conjures up visions for the king and queen with peacock feathers; on similar narrative ploys in Sanskrit drama that could relate to the 'unspoken language' of *Book of Yosipas* fr. 6 and what seems to be a dancing pantomime in fr. 7, see Williams Jackson 1898: 246–7 and 252–4.

⁵¹ It is not unlikely that an erotic subplot between Aesop and a fellow slave unfolded in this version, such as that of the Greek *Moicheutria* mime in *P. Oxy.* 413 verso, which concerns the love affair of a slave named Aesop with a fellow slave, Apollonia. Andreassi 2001 argues for a direct influence on the mime by the *Life of Aesop*. A complex network of influence is much more likely: Konstantakos 2006: 595–8. If this was an erotic plot indeed, it might have presented, alternatively, an affair between Xanthus/Kidinus and the girl, with Aesop being the in-between rogue. Such is the situation in the *Priyadarśikā* with the king's jester playing precisely this type of dramatic role.

⁵² The talking name is also deployed in *Ratnāvalī*, another drama attributed to King Harsha, in which similarly novelistic overtones are introduced with the servant's name Sāgarikā ('of the Ocean') introducing the exoticism of a distant, dangerous and uncivilised space. In the drama, Sāgarikā has been saved from a shipwreck and has entered the service of King Udayana, but in reality she is princess Ratnāvalī, who had been married to King Udayana just before the shipwreck; cf. Nariman, Williams Jackson and Ogden 1923: lxxvii–lxxxiii.

Translating the local

The inclusion of such adventurous plots does not alter the fact that the *Book of Yosipias* retained a core of scenes of everyday sociality and conviviality in which Aesop's exchanges with his master took centre stage. This contrast between everyday realism and adventurous fantasy provided the defining narrative tempo of the *Life* for its Greek readers and this aesthetic mix remained in the Asian Late Antique translations, including the Uyghur version. The fragment published by von Le Coq describes a symposium taking place at a house, which is also the setting for the action in Zieme's fragment 4 recto, as well as frs. 7, and probably 6. In the Greek *Life* these episodes are firmly located in the world of the symposium, of commensality and a society of learned Greek males. These rhythms of male sociality were translatable and recognisable for Uyghur Manichaeans, even though they were not familiar with some of the more specific cultural characteristics of Greek symposia. The action in Zieme's fragment 3 recto unfolds in the streets of the town and in a bathing scene, while the narrative on the verso is set in a symposium at a friend's house, when Kidinus leaves the table to relieve himself and Yosipias follows him with a towel and a bowl of water. The fable that Yosipias tells Kidinus in the process is characteristic of Aesop's mode of everyday comedy and it concerns a king of sybaritic excesses who defecated his own brains. This type of lower-body comic narrative was by no means unknown in the Central Asian Silk Road.⁵³ Such episodes and dramatic settings persist in the Uyghur translation, as does the mixing and juxtaposition of exotic and endotic themes.

Certain modes of representing urban everydayness persevered also in the Syriac and Arabic translations. We can see vividly the cross-cultural persistence of these aesthetics in the way that an eighth-century Syrian reader responded to the *Life*. In a letter to John the Stylite of Litarb dated to 715 CE, George, bishop of the Arab tribes, provides a Syriac paraphrase of the *Life of Aesop*, which has remained unacknowledged by classicists.⁵⁴

⁵³ That the humour of lower bodily functions (ubiquitous in the Greek *Life*) would translate easily to Uyghur, or any, standards may not need proof, but we have from the ninth century a sketch of a man with the Turkic name Tämär Quš ('iron bird') walking and gesticulating, while sporting an enormous erection. This manuscript was found in Dunhuang on the Silk Road and the Sogdian text that accompanies it mentions Tämär Quš in conjunction with a lady Yimkičor. A photograph of the sketch can be found in Whitfield and Sims-Williams 2004: 220 no. 143; Sims-Williams and Hamilton 1990: 77–9, pl. 17.

⁵⁴ *Brit. Libr. Add.* 12.154 foll. 276a–b. For this parallel I owe many thanks to Jack Tannous, with whom I am currently preparing an article on the relation between this letter and the history of transmission of the Greek *Life of Aesop*. Even though I cannot elaborate here on the reasoning, there are various indications that the Greek recension that was the main influence on Syriac and subsequent eastern

George provides John the Stylite with a commentary concerning the literary characters of Aesop and Xanthus by paraphrasing the *Life of Aesop*, especially chs. 20–31. This is the first episode of the Samos section, in which Xanthus strolls around the agora with his entourage of students and buys Aesop at the slave market. In the Greek *Life*, before turning to Aesop Xanthus interrogates two other slaves, who function as narrative foils. One of them is a schoolteacher (γρᾱμματικός), the other is a lyre player (ψάλτης); both embody functions of the high culture that Aesop's wisdom upstages 'from below'. George of the Arab tribes misremembers the passage and, significantly, creates a different range of slaves/foils: a carpenter, a metalworker, a shoemaker, a tailor and, generally, craftsmen. While this paraphrase misses the dramatic clash of the Greek *Life* between Aesop and the world of culture (*paideia*), nevertheless it provides a range of characters that are consonant with the general tenor of the *Life*. In providing a range of craftsmen that embody the low, material world of the town market, George turns the clash of Aesop against *paideia* into a harmony and concord of the narrative's tropes and avatars of everydayness. Instead of translating a scene of cultural contestation, he keys into the everyday poetics of Aesop himself, as he is depicted in the Greek *Life*.⁵⁵

The sense of the domestic and familiar becomes, then, in George's paraphrase a cross-cultural here-and-now. Certainly, George's understanding of Greek narrative and culture stands at the end of and is filtered through a long process of Hellenisation in Syrian culture and a long-lived Graeco-Roman imperial and colonial presence, while George's reading of the local and everyday element in a Greek narrative would be further complicated by the relatively recent Arab conquest.⁵⁶ In this respect, George's reading of the *Life*'s 'local realism' and its representation of the domestic is partly caught up in the power dynamics between what Whitmarsh calls, in the case of the eastern Mediterranean High Empire, the local and the translocal.⁵⁷ This means that the way in which George processes and constructs the abstract idea of small-town life meshes with the ways in which a transregional,

translations was recension G. On George of the Arab tribes, see Tannous 2008. Tannous is currently preparing an edition of the previously unpublished Syriac manuscript with English translation. A German translation of the letter is available in Ryssel 1891: 68–9.

⁵⁵ On this aspect of Aesop as a *bricoleur* of the lowly material and readily available, see Kurke 2011: 191–201.

⁵⁶ On Syrian cultural Hellenisation and the role of translation in this process, see especially Brock 1977 (with reference to Aḥiqar and Aesop narratives in this process), 1982 and 1983. The acceptance and domestication of Greek *paideia* in Syriac literature had peaked by the eighth century CE, when George was composing his epistle to John the Stylite, despite the recent Arab conquest.

⁵⁷ Whitmarsh 2010b. See also especially Ando 2010; Goldhill 2010; Woolf 2010; as well as the other chapters in Whitmarsh 2010a.

global empire redefines what it means to be local. The experience of the local, then, becomes a multiform, fragmented and conflicted construct that incorporates elements of the view 'from above' and that 'from below'. However, the cross-cultural adaptability of the tropes through which the *Life* represents a local everyday world is not to be explained solely in relation to imperial power and the dynamics between political centre and periphery. The *Life's* figuration of *bios* travelled well outside the confines of centralised and superimposed Graeco-Roman power; it entered different languages, political formations and cultural regions retaining its core aesthetic. The nucleus of seriocomic stories that constructed the sense of the quotidian set the general tone of the *Life's* reception even in its translations; and the fiction of the local was defined for readers as much by regional power structures as it was by the structures of the narrative and its themes.

At this general level, what is true of George of the Arab tribes is also true of the Manichaean readers in the Uyghur kingdom of Qočo. The narrative back and forth between the familiar and the exotic in the *Life* has as its core aesthetic a close engagement with the quotidian through its defamiliarisation. This trope of narrative estrangement made the 'local realism' of the *Life* translatable because it foregrounded and revealed the varying ways, at different times and places, in which the readers' own social and cultural identity was fissured, fragmented and conflicted. Thus, the *Life's* thematic dialogue between the foreign and the domestic in the context of a Central Asian town would feed into and appeal to the intersections of identity categories, which were complicated within the rich, syncretic cultural palimpsest of the Silk Road and its multiple ethnic groups, languages and scripts, religions, cultural influences and successive conquerors.⁵⁸ In the Uyghur context, the *Life of Aesop* found its place in the newly established kingdom of Qočo, filtered through a Syriac substrate, perhaps a Persian version, and Indian influences. The text circulated in a context of mixed ethnicities and religions within a small kingdom whose economic power as a throughway on the Silk Road was predicated on cultural hybridity and the transience of people and goods. The rhythms of life in Qočo itself were caught up in the tensions between the traditional nomadism of Turkic culture and the developing patterns of urban settlement.⁵⁹ Furthermore, displacement and persecution complicated the nature of social, religious and cultural identity, since the conquering Uyghurs had themselves recently

⁵⁸ See the bibliography in nn. 24, 25 and 47 above. On the ethnic mix of Qočo, see von Gabain 1973: 18–33, including in the period various Turkic tribes among which the Uyghur, Indians, Kushans, Hephthalites, Tocharians, Sakas, Sogdians, Chinese, Tibetans, Tanguts, Khitans.

⁵⁹ On which, see especially von Gabain 1950b.

migrated, fleeing the Kirghiz invasion of 840 that brought the end of the extensive Uyghur Khaganate further North, while in the same period the Manichaean faith faced violent persecutions in Tang China.⁶⁰

In such a context, to reduce domestic and foreign elements of the *Book of Yosipas* to either side of a polarity of power, in the manner of Venuti's approach to translation and culture, is unrealistic, for the Uyghur Manichaean milieu of Qocho is in itself fragmented and multicultural. As narrative themes, the familiar and the exotic of the *Book of Yosipas* are co-dependent tropes, which express and address the mixed nature of the domestic itself. At the same time, this situation is not restricted to the Silk Road reception of the *Life of Aesop*. Identities, more generally, are overdetermined and situational; they are conflicted and inconsistent positions, not pure essences. It is crucial to take into account that the overdetermination of identity, its contradictions and fragmentations stretch back in time into the pre-modern world; modern conditions of identity, such as intersectionality or alienation, were not preceded historically by a golden age of an *absolutely* uniform, coherent and whole experience of life, at least not in the urban societies of ancient empires (if anywhere).⁶¹ This condition of identity was *more* complex and nuanced in mixed and multicultural political regions, like the Silk Road under its different conquerors or the imperial Greek world, which saw the composition of the *Life of Aesop*. Certainly, ancient and medieval translators working at the in-between margins of languages and cultures were themselves a self-selective group of readers for whom the hybrid type of fiction of the *Life of Aesop* would have had a particular appeal. However, this hybridity created by conflicting cultural spheres and identities was not the exclusive characteristic of translators. For other ancient readers too, the literary interplay of the *Life of Aesop* between the alien and the everyday as a narrative aesthetic would have resonated with their own situational incongruities, conflicts and alienations in their social experience.⁶² We can see this in the way the Greek *Life of Aesop*

⁶⁰ Mackerras 1990; Lieu 1998: 128–31; Drompp 2005; Foltz 2010: 79.

⁶¹ On the feminist concept of intersectionality, see McCall 2005; Davis 2008; both with further bibliography. Intersectionality as a critical concept is deployed especially in highlighting issues of power inequality and marginalisation; however, in a broader sense, it also raises issues about the nature of identity more generally. Alienation and everyday life: Lefebvre 1991: 59–83 and 2002: 206–16 and 219–26. The exclusions and gaps of identity that intersectionality has brought to the fore can be read as a reconfiguration of what Henri Lefebvre in his *Critique of Everyday Life* had traced as varieties of alienation in the experience of everyday life in twentieth-century capitalism.

⁶² Thus I take here a broader sense of hybridity and 'in-betweenness' as a constant condition of identity and of its expression through language: Bhabha 1994: 52–6 (page numbers refer to the 2004 Routledge Classics reprint). As it will become evident below, this is not to also argue that all contexts and contestations of hybridity are the same; cf. Kraidy 2005: 1–14, 45–71 and 148–62.

is predicated on a contradiction: it engages a narrative world seen ‘from below’ and serves it up to an audience of *pepaideumenoi* reading ‘from above’. We can also see this very clearly in the ways in which the *Book of Yosipās* stands at an oblique angle and often in direct conflict with the doctrinal core of its Manichaean readership.

The best example that reveals this religious tension in the *Book of Yosipās* is the hybrid aesthetic of the animal fable, which played a significant and transgressive role in the imaginary of the Uyghur Manichaean reader. The animal fables that were embedded in the *Life of Aesop* evoked a defamiliarising and paradoxical look at human *bios* by creating a didactic amalgam of human habit and the fictional otherness of the animal. Animal fable and, more generally, animal fiction had been an integral part of the cultures of storytelling between the Mediterranean and India and by the ninth century it had certainly been cross-fertilised with indigenous Turkic forms of animal figuration.⁶³ Including the codex of the *Book of Yosipās*, various Central Asian fragments of books have survived containing narrative material from the *Pañcatantra* and *Kalila wa-Dimna*, while there are also Manichaean Sogdian fragments from the region that preserve Aesopic animal fable.⁶⁴ As far as the animal narratives incorporated in the *Life of Aesop* are concerned, the one certain correspondence of this theme in the *Book of Yosipās* is the riddle about the slaughtering of sheep and pigs (ch. 48 of the Greek *Life*).⁶⁵ One of the intellectuals poses a riddle at a symposium: ‘Why do sheep not cry when they are led to their sacrifice, yet piglets squeal loudly?’ It is because sheep are used to being handled for their milk and wool and pigs are not, Aesop meets the challenge of the riddle.

⁶³ For this period the debate concerning the relation and direction of influence between Indian and Greek fable is irrelevant, on which see Adrados 1999: 287–366, with further bibliography. On Mesopotamian fable, see Williams 1956; Lambert 1960: 150–212; Perry 1965: xxviii–xxxiv; Falkowitz 1984; Holzberg 2002: 13–15 and 36 with bibliography; Beaulieu 2007; and van der Toorn 2007, on the relation between oral substrate and written wisdom in the Babylonian context. On Indian fable, see also Keith 1928: 242–65; Sastri 1960: 130–8; and Thite 1984. On Arabic beast fable besides n. 29 above (with bibliography on Syriac fable), see Irwin 1992. On the dissemination of animal frame stories within the region’s story-collections, see Perry 1959; and Irwin 2004: 63–102. On animals in the traditional Uyghur imaginary, see von Gabain 1950b: 36–7 (on the symbolism of the wolf in Old Turkic cultures), 1961: 65, 1964b: 212 and 215 (animals in fortune-telling books), 1973: 1.20, 27 and 64 (zodiacal calendar), 1.40–52, 64–5, 79, 99 (use of animals), 1.68–9 (animal names as honorary titles), 1.72–3 (personal names from the animal world), 1.155 (pantomime animal masks from Kucha), 1.159–61 (animal symbolism). See also Boratav 1964.

⁶⁴ Henning 1945; Tardieu 2002–2003: 585–6. Cf. also the parables in Bang 1931; and the English translations in Klimkeit 1993: 177–99 (Sogdian narratives) and 311–23 (Uyghur narratives). On *Pañcatantra* in Central Asia, see Geissler and Zieme 1970; Ölmez 1993; Wilkens 2003.

⁶⁵ Von Le Coq 1922: 33 fr. 14 = Wilkens 2000: 60–1 fr. 33. On the affinity between fables and riddles and their use in the *Life of Aesop*, see Konstantakos 2010, with further bibliography.

There is a scholarly consensus that fables, parables and other short narratives became part of the storytelling arsenal of the Manichaeans through a process of assimilation. Manichaeans eagerly absorbed narrative material from other cultures and religions and appropriated it through allegorical interpretation and with the addition, in writing, of a didactic frame, in the manner of the promythium and epimythium, which directed and anchored the story to Manichaean doctrine.⁶⁶ However, the case of the animal riddle in the *Book of Yosipus* is not a free-standing story, but a narrative embedded in a biographical-novelistic frame. This situation marks the animal riddle as particularly problematic, since its theme, the ritual slaughter of animals, contravenes central moral censures at the heart of Manichaean doctrine. Killing animals was forbidden for both classes of Manichaeans, the Elect and the Auditors, while especially for the Elect there was a range of actions, including manual labour, that were prohibited as injurious to the physical world and the light that was trapped in it. Similarly, the vegetarian diet of the Elect and their metabolism of matter were considered a central process in the liberation of light from matter and darkness. The outer circle of the Manichaean community, the Auditors, played a significant role in this process: they procured the vegetarian meals of the Elect and, even though they committed violence upon plants, were redeemed, because they provided for the important task of the Elect's metabolism.⁶⁷

Needless to say, a range of very particular readings of the Aesopic riddle involving animal slaughter would be available to a readership so thoroughly concerned with violence towards animals and dietary restrictions. Of course, if discussed in didactic and communal Manichaean situations the episode in the *Book of Yosipus* could easily be assimilated to religious categories through a rhetoric of allegoresis that was never recorded on the codex. However, we should equally entertain two further considerations. First, as Lieu points out, Manichaean monastic documents from Qoço show that not only were Manichaean doctrine and real-life practices at odds in their economic activities (intensive farming, viticulture, keeping of domestic animals), but also that the Manichaean monasteries were thoroughly involved and integrated in the social and economic rhythms of the kingdom.⁶⁸ Similarly, Colditz points out that the role of the outer circle of Manichaeans,

⁶⁶ Henning 1945; Asmussen 1966; Klimkeit 1993: 177–99 and 311–23, and 1995; Wilkens 2003.

⁶⁷ On Manichaean bodily discipline, see BeDuhn 2000: especially 25–68 (on the 'seals' and 'commandments' regulating the behaviour of the Elect and the Auditors) and 126–208 (on the salvational role of the Elect's metabolism). Cf. also Brown 1988: 190–209 and 390–2. Since the Elect followed also strict sexual abstinence, the multiple sexual episodes of the *Life of Aesop* in their Manichaean reception would also implicate the tensions of identity discussed here.

⁶⁸ Lieu 1998: 76–97; cf. also Klimkeit 1998c.

the Auditors, was split between monastic and worldly pursuits, in such a way that the division of their time during the day and its regulation was incorporated into official doctrine.⁶⁹ In other words, the applications, contexts and times of Manichaean discipline were not absolute and ubiquitous, but rather situational and following certain patterns and social rhythms.

The second consideration is that, for the Manichaean reader, the narrative of the *Book of Yosipas* itself could collude with the sense of these social rhythms and different contexts of identity. Thus, the text could also be read against the grain of doctrine. Wisdom narratives like this story, which explain and reveal the practicalities of life through everyday practices, would also have provided other patterns of understanding the text, patterns that related the story not to the reader's religious community, but to the world outside: to scenes ubiquitous across the Silk Road, of animals being used for labour and sustenance. The narrative itself then could offer the textual locus of an imaginary communion with a broader world, an imaginary acceptance of an everyday community with those outside the monastic circle, a community that was as necessary as it was unavoidable. And the acceptance of such counter-disciplinary and destabilising narratives within monastic libraries was facilitated – as was the case in Christian Byzantium – on account of the exculpating *potential* of acceptable, legitimate and authoritative ways of reading this carnivalesque text – Manichaean allegoresis being one of these ways.⁷⁰

In short, the narrative structures of both the Greek *Life of Aesop* and the Uyghur *Book of Yosipas* problematised the distance between their learned readers and their 'popular' environments, by aestheticising the discontinuities of the reader's identities and by defamiliarising and privileging the everyday domain of experience with its ambiguities and attractions. If this rhetoric of everyday realism created for imperial Greek *pepaideumenoi* a fictional place of community with their popular social context, it also performed the same role in Qoço: as a readerly fiction it bridged and separated at once the distance between the Manichaean Uyghur reader and the town world.

⁶⁹ Colditz 2009.

⁷⁰ A parallel example in the Byzantine context would be codex Bodleianus Baroccianus 194, which includes the *Life of Aesop* and places it among improving stories and grammatical scholarship. The context at the beginning of the manuscript, where the *Life of Aesop* is found, is didactic: distichs of Cato, the *Golden Verses* attributed to Pythagoras. The rest of the codex is occupied by grammatical and rhetorical treatises and commentaries. And yet this is the only medieval manuscript that includes the risqué episode of Aesop's sexual wager (chs. 75–6), which is otherwise attested only in *P.Oxy.* 3331 fr. 2 (third century CE), while it was evidently torn and removed in other Byzantine codices.

*Mime and the romance***Ruth Webb*

The importance of the theatre and of the two most popular performance types, mime and pantomime, in the circulation of stories in the Roman Empire would be difficult to overestimate. Their impact, however, is hard to gauge given the paucity of our precise knowledge, particularly of the subjects of mimes, and the relative lack of explicit acknowledgement of these arts in high literature, including the novel. We know from various sources, however, that mime and pantomime were to be seen on stage at festivals in small towns, like Oenoanda in Lycia and Oxyrhynchus in Egypt, as well as in major centres like Rome, Antioch and Alexandria, and that they were also performed in the private houses of the elite. A Syriac tale from the later sixth century depicts mimes performing in the streets of Amida.¹ If it is possible to use the word in the Roman context, these were truly international types of entertainment. This means that these dramatic forms were potentially far more effective in spreading stories and story patterns (the latter is important for this chapter) than were the high literary forms of new comedy, tragedy, historiography or oratory, whose contribution to the development of prose fiction has been well documented,² but which were largely confined to the upper echelons of society who had access to education (though we should not forget the continued existence of tragedy and comedy as performance arts in Greek festivals).

The silent, gestural mimesis of the pantomime is present in the novels in accounts of performances, like the Judgement of Paris in Apuleius³

* This chapter contains elements of papers presented at Edinburgh and Gregynog. I am grateful to audiences there for their responses and particularly to Froma Zeitlin and Tim Whitmarsh for their comments on an earlier draft.

¹ John of Ephesus, *Lives of the Eastern Saints*, 52, PO 19: 164–79.

² See Fusillo 1991: 31–54 and Crismani 1997 on the theatre in the Greek novels, May 2007 on the drama in Apuleius, and Van Mal-Maeder 2007 on declamation themes in the novel.

³ Apuleius, *Met.*, 10.30–34. The performance as described in the novel is not typical of the pantomime, see May 2008.

or the rustic dances in *Daphnis and Chloe* (2.36).⁴ The suggestion by Hägg and Utas (2003) among others that *Metiochus and Parthenope* was staged as a pantomime is extremely attractive and, if correct, would be a precious indication of a different type of relationship between stage and page.⁵ Here, however, it is the presence of mime in the novels, particularly the Greek romances, that will occupy us. The mime was a comic ensemble art characterised by its mercilessly irreverent portrayal of a wide range of character types; Choricus of Gaza, writing in the sixth century, mentions various tradespeople such as masters, slaves, innkeepers, notaries, sausage-sellers and cooks as subjects of mime.⁶ Mime was famous for its frenetic slapstick and for the mock violence suffered by the buffoon, who took on various roles in the different scenarios, the most famous of which depicted scandalous love stories involving adulterous affairs or other types of illicit desire. Both of these features – the focus on everyday characters and situations and the predilection for stories that explored the limits of the acceptable – are reflected in the Greek definition cited by a Late Antique Latin grammarian, Diomedes, according to which the mime was ‘an imitation of life (*mimesis biou*) containing both licit and illicit things’.⁷ The violence and sexual scandal of the mime are neatly summed up in a relief panel from the theatre in Sabratha, modern Libya, showing one man throwing a punch at another while a woman looks on; clearly represented in the background are the doors that were a prominent feature of the mime, enabling the quick entrances (the unexpected return of the husband, for example), exits and games of concealment that characterised the mime.⁸

The mime itself was a fluid, endlessly adaptable form, so it is no surprise to find its traces in different aspects of ancient prose fiction. The cast

⁴ On the pantomime and the novel, see Ruiz Montero forthcoming. On the pantomime itself, see Lada-Richards 2007, Garelli 2007 and Webb 2008. On the mime, see Wiemken 1972 and Webb 2008.

⁵ Hägg and Utas 2003: 46–52. The evidence from Greek sources is unfortunately not sufficient to draw any firm conclusions. As Mignogna 1996: 232–3 points out, the context of Lucian’s mention of Parthenope in pantomime as an example of ‘the most wanton women’ does not fit what we know of the plot (unless Lucian is making a joke at the expense of his speaker). The scholion to Dionysius the Periegete cited in Hägg and Utas 2003 46–7 (= GT1b) may have derived its connection between Parthenope and the dance from Lucian’s text itself and, in any case, needs emendation to make it fit the plot of the novel. At best, as in the case of Leucippe (see below), we can speak of common themes.

⁶ Choricus, *Or.* 8.110. The titles of Laberius’ Latin literary mimes include *The Seamstress*, *The Pot*, *The Laundries* and *The Fisherman*. See Panayotakis (ed.) 2010. Mythological burlesques were also played by the mimes, but these are beyond the scope of this chapter.

⁷ Diomedes, *Ars Grammatica*, 3, in *Grammatici Latini* ed. H. Keil, p. 491, ll. 15–16: *mimus est sermonis cuiuslibet imitatio et motus sine reverentia, vel factorum et dictorum turpium cum lascivia imitatio; a Graecis ita definitur. μῖμος ἐστὶν μίμησις βίου τὰ τε συγκεχωρημένα καὶ ἀσυγχώρητα περιέχων.*

⁸ See Webb 2008: fig. 8.

of low-life characters who people the Latin novels and, to some extent, the Greek romances, have obvious affinities with the equally polyphonic mime.⁹ Here, however, the focus will be on the love-stories of the mime and the various ways in which these are reflected and reworked in the Greek romances, primarily Achilles Tatius and Heliodorus, but also in the adultery tales of Apuleius' novel. The adulterous wives of the *Metamorphoses* seem to have stepped straight into the world of the novel from the mimic stage. In the Greek romances, by contrast, the presence of the mimic types is less obvious as they are subject to comprehensive adaptation.¹⁰ It is time then to look in more detail at what we can piece together of those stories. The adultery scenario explored the triangular relationship between the clever young wife, her lover and the husband.¹¹ The version we hear most about showed the lover hiding in the house as the husband returns unexpectedly. A very different type of erotic scenario is represented by the fragmentary script of the *Jealous Mistress* on the verso of *P. Oxy.* 413, usually dated to the second century CE.¹² This working script, which shows signs of having been used by a mime troupe, contains the words of an unnamed female character who is in love with her slave, Aesopus. He, however, is in love with another slave, Apollonia, and has evidently rejected his mistress' advances. The mistress therefore orders him and Apollonia to be put to death (in vain) and then plots to kill her husband (a plot that is also thwarted). The 'love' expressed by this character is a purely sexual desire that quickly turns to hatred and violence. The woman voices her passion with startling directness, declaring 'I desire the slave now' and demanding that he be brought to her 'so that he can fuck me'.¹³

Although the *Jealous Mistress* play was dubbed the 'Adulteress' (*Moicheutria*) when it was first published, it differs in vital ways from the traditional adultery plot. The first difference lies in the asymmetrical relationship between a socially dominant woman and a subservient male and the threats

⁹ This is particularly true of the picaresque Latin novels. See the remarks of Whitmarsh and Bartsch 2008: 255–6. Brigands, in particular, present a point of contact between mime, Apuleius and the Greek romances. See Winkler 1980 and Jones 1980 on their portrayal in the novels. I hope to develop this aspect of the relationship between mime and the novel elsewhere.

¹⁰ Smotric 1967 points out some of the adaptations undergone by the mime in its transition into the novel. I am extremely grateful to Maya Muratov, Vesna Popovski and Wendy Sloane for translating this article.

¹¹ See Webb 2008: 105–7. The basic plot is alluded to by Ovid, *Tristia* 2.500 and Juvenal 6.42. On the impact of this scenario on Latin literature see, for example, Fantham 1988, Fabre-Serris 2009.

¹² The text has been edited by Grenfell and Hunt 1903, Cunningham 1987 and Andreassi 2001. (I cite Cunningham's edition here.)

¹³ Cunningham (ed.) 1987: fr. 7, col. 2, ll. 2–3: ἐρῶ νῦν παιδ(. . .) / [. . . αὐ]τὸν ἵνα με βινῇσῃ. On the possible connections between this plot and the *Life of Aesop*, see Andreassi 2001 and Avlamiš in this volume (at his n. 50).

of violence, even death, that the woman can thus make against the object of her desire and her rival. A further difference is that this unequal relationship is not consummated. This plot, which is also found among the Hellenistic mimes of Herodas (*Mimiamb* 5), has a great deal in common with both the Potiphar's wife plot (which adds the element of the false accusation) and the Phaedra story (where mistress and slave are replaced by stepmother and stepson). It seems likely that the mime also explored the stepmother-stepson relationship, although there are no surviving examples.¹⁴

On the other side of the same scrap of papyrus is the script of another mime with relevance to the novels: the *Charition* mime whose eponymous heroine is a Greek girl held captive in India who is rescued by her brother and other Greeks (whose behaviour is far from glorious). As well as providing an example of an exotic adventure story in the mime (a type of plot that is never mentioned in the ancient discussions of the mime), this script shows how mime could incorporate allusions to canonical texts such as the *Odyssey* and *Iphigeneia in Tauris*: like Iphigeneia, Charition is rescued by her brother from an exotic and dangerous land and the Greek characters copy Odysseus' stratagem by getting the Indian king drunk.¹⁵ The exuberant staging involved a chorus of babbling barbarian women along with a noisy musical accompaniment.¹⁶ If the Indian characters are ridiculed for their strange speech, the Greeks are mocked too through the character of the farting fool (complete with sound effects).

These examples of the adultery mime and the two scripts in *P.Oxy* 413 illustrate well the way in which mime was characterised by its everyday subjects, including merciless caricatures of various social and ethnic groups, and its propensity to show the forbidden. These characteristics are reflected in the elite condemnations of the mime as low and immoral but, from a different perspective, it is clear that one of the vital aspects of mime, and one that explains much of the condemnation, was that it allowed characters whose voices were normally silenced to be heard and to express their desires. This is clearly the case in the *Jealous Mistress* mime and presumably in that

¹⁴ Following a suggestion by Reich, Helmut Wiemken suggested that such a play might be at the origin of Apuleius' story of a stepmother's spurned desire for her stepson leading to attempted murder, averted by the substitution of a harmless sleeping potion. See Reich 1903: 589; Wiemken 1972: 139–146. Andreassi 1997 rightly questions the project of reconstructing a mime plot on the basis of Apuleius' tale.

¹⁵ See Hall 2010.

¹⁶ Stefania Santelia 1989 suggested that this mime might have been at the origin of the story of Charite in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*, given both the similarity in name and in the stratagem used (the Greeks of the mime get their captors drunk as does Charite's fiancé).

of the classic adultery plot, but must also have applied to other types of play like the bandit mime, which placed the outlaw centre stage, as well as to other plots.¹⁷ And, what was worse, the mime clearly elicited sympathy for these characters in many cases or, at the very least, induced the audience to share their viewpoint temporarily. The intensity of this audience reaction is hinted at by Augustine when he recalls how, as a young man, he used to share both the joy of the lovers on stage when they were together and their sadness when they were parted.¹⁸ Although he does not explicitly identify mime here, the fact that he calls their love ‘illicit’ (*per flagitia*) points strongly to the mime rather than any other dramatic genre. But the dramatic form of the mime made it equally possible for the character of the wronged husband to elicit sympathy, as implied by Choricus in his speech in defence of mime, in which he argues against the criticisms commonly levelled against the art.¹⁹ It was, of course, entirely in the interests of Choricus’ arguments for the moral probity and general harmlessness of the mime to stress the way in which the outraged husband was finally vindicated at the end of the play. But such a multiple perspective, allowing for competing sets of norms and values to be expressed (and for all the characters without exception to be subject to ridicule) is entirely in keeping with the dramatic form of the mime.²⁰ An important feature of mime emerges from this: its lack (or perhaps explicit rejection) of any single, transcendent set of norms, a feature that would seem at first sight to place it at the opposite end of the spectrum from the Greek romances with their unwavering depiction of a single set of ideals, embodied by the faithful couple.

The presence of mime in the novel

The clearest connection between the mime and the novel is to be found in echoes of mime plots and of the characteristic presentation of mime, particularly rapid entrances (as the husband returns unexpectedly), concealed characters (like the adulterer hiding in the house) and the comic violence that ensues. The novel most closely associated with mime is Petronius’ *Satyricon* with its explicit references and its many scenes with a mimic flavour, analysed in detail by Panayotakis 1995. Apuleius’ *Metamorphoses*

¹⁷ This characteristic of the mime distinguishes it from declamation where adulterous wives and brigands feature but do not express themselves directly.

¹⁸ Augustine, *Confessions* 3.2. ¹⁹ Choricus, *Or.* 8, *On Behalf of the Mimes*, 30 and 55.

²⁰ See Webb 2008: 116–38.

also contain scenes which are clearly inspired by the mime, most obviously the adultery tales of Book 9 (and possibly the stepmother story in Book 10).²¹ It is not surprising to find echoes of mime in the comic-realist Latin novels (or in their lost Greek counterparts) with their cast of 'low' characters and actions. But the 'ideal' Greek romances also contain elements that can be best understood as reflections of mime plots (particularly, but not exclusively, the adultery plot) and of the stage presentation of mime (in the shape of frenetic movement or comic violence, for example).

As Elisa Mignogna 1996 pointed out, there are several points of contact between Achilles Tatius' novel and the mime, including the relationship between Melite and Clitophon with its explicit echoes of the adultery mime. Thersander's sudden arrival on the scene, expressed by verbs of rapid movement (ἐμπηδάω) and physical violence (ῥαπίζω), certainly likens him to the wronged husband of the mime, as does his accusation of *moicheia* (adultery) levelled against Clitophon.²² As Mignogna observes, the trial scene that follows has parallels in another fragmentary mime script and, one could add, Choricus' claim that the adultery mime has its denouement in a trial in which the husband is vindicated. A further episode of *Leucippe and Clitophon* in which I think we might be able to identify an allusion to the mime is the storm and shipwreck (3.1–2). Shipwrecks were, of course, a standard subject for ekphrasis in novels and rhetoric and had Homeric models in the storms of the *Odyssey*, but the presentation of this one in particular suggests a further model. Clitophon's absurd account of the passengers running from one side of the ship to the other with their baggage in a vain attempt to balance the rocking of the ship could well reflect the staging of the mimic shipwrecks mentioned by Seneca (*De Ira*, 2.2.5).

The contemporary setting of *Leucippe and Clitophon* and its comic tone make it the most germane among the Greek novels to the world of the mime. However, it is not alone. As both Smotric and Mignogna pointed out, there is a clear echo of the *Jealous Mistress* plot type in the story of Arsace in Heliodorus' *Aethiopica*, a far more high-minded novel both in intellectual and moral terms. And, as I shall suggest, the story of Cnemon contains similar allusions. In all these cases, the most interesting questions are raised by the ways in which the mime is adapted to its new context on the page. In what follows, I will explore three types of mime with particular relevance

²¹ On the literary models for these adultery tales, see Harrison 2006.

²² Achilles Tatius, *Leucippe and Clitophon*, 5.23.4–5. The parallel was also noted by Smotric 1967. On mime and the novel, see also García Gual 1975. For a subtle analysis of the accusation of adultery against Clitophon, see Schwartz 2000–2001.

to the romances: the adultery mime and its two asymmetrical variants, the jealous mistress and the stepmother story, in order to see some of the different ways in which these are reflected, refracted and recombined in the novels. I will be looking in particular at these story-types as structures. To a certain extent, this is inevitable given our relative lack of knowledge about the precise details of what was staged, but it is also entirely appropriate for an art that seems to have relied more on the constant reworking, adaptation and renewal of a set of stories involving a cast of character types, perhaps with stock names like Leucippe and Charition/Charite, than on the circulation and preservation of authored and authorised scripts.²³ The Greek mime scripts that have survived should therefore be seen not as canonical texts that would have been available for novelists and their readers to consume privately in written form, but as scattered examples of narrative structures that were constantly reworked throughout the empire in both east and west up to the sixth century at least.²⁴

Illicit loves in the pages of the novels

The fullest example of the classic adultery plot is to be found in the interlocking set of adultery tales in Book 9 of Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*. The first of these corresponds particularly well to what we can glean of the basic adultery mime. In this 'Tale of the Tub' (9.5–7), presented as a 'witty story' (*lepida fabula*) (9.4) overheard by the ass narrator, a poor man is cuckolded by his clever and promiscuous wife who manages, through a neat piece of improvisation, to explain away the lover's presence in the house and continue their lovemaking under the husband's nose. In this case, the plot seems to be transposed directly from stage to novel and the fact that it is presented as a true story overheard by the ass underlines

²³ The situation in Republican Rome was different, perhaps due to the transfer of a Greek art to the Latin stage. The Oxyrhynchus papyrus, like the other mime fragments, shows that mime was written, making the circulation of scripts and the word-for-word reproduction of plays from one performance to the next that this enabled a possibility. However, it is worth noting that even *P. Oxy.* 413 contains evidence of the constant reworking that such scripts were subject to in the corrections and additions to the *Jealous Mistress* and the alternative opening to *Charition*. See the comments of Andreassi 1997: 11. Parker 2011: 165 and 167 suggests that the unauthorised is central to popular culture, an idea with particular relevance to the mime.

²⁴ For this reason, I would prefer to see the type of parallel that Santelia 1989 points out between the *Charition* mime and the Charite episode of the *Metamorphoses* as the result of common patterns (going back to the *Odyssey* in the case of the stratagem of making the opponent drunk) or names. Similarly, I would not see the mention of a Leucippe mime in *P. Berol.* 13927 as evidence for the dramatisation of Achilles Tatius' novel. For the hypothesis that Leucippe was also the title of a tragedy known in the Roman period, see Slater and Cropp 2009.

either the illusory nature of the world or the unreliability of narrators, or both.²⁵

As we saw above, echoes of the adultery mime are present in *Leucippe and Clitophon* but in a much reworked form. Thersander's unexpected arrival recalls the classic adultery mime and Melite is comparable to the heroines of mime in her forthright expressions of sexual desire, but the differences are equally important. Melite's language is far more allusive and less explicit than that of the women of the mime, at least if the *Jealous Mistress* script is representative. More importantly, Melite is not a classic adulteress (since these seem to have carried on parallel relationships over time as in the Apuleian tales) nor is she a jealous mistress type, since her relationship to Clitophon is not that of mistress to slave.²⁶ Accordingly, she does not use threats of violence, resorting instead to rhetorical means of persuasion, nor does she harm or threaten her rival, Leucippe, even once she knows her identity. The desire to kill the other woman, that occurs in the *Jealous Mistress* mime, does occur in the novel, but is presented as a false accusation against Melite, made by a fake prisoner in the pay of Thersander as part of a plot to make Clitophon believe she is dead (7.1). Achilles Tatius thus combines aspects of different plot types in his depiction of the Melite-Clitophon-Thersander triangle.

In the other Greek romances, it is the asymmetrical desire of the mistress for the slave (or the stepmother for the stepson) that recurs in several subplots. Most obviously, the mistress/slave relationship is to be found in the *Ephesiaca*, in the desire of Manto (daughter of the brigand leader Apsyrtus) for Habrocomes who is her father's captive (2.3–10) and then the story of Kyno ('Bitch') who also falls in love with the hero while he is her husband's slave (3.12).²⁷ Both of these thwarted desires lead to false accusations, first of attempted rape and then of murder, after Kyno, like the character of the *Jealous Mistress* mime tries to kill her husband and (unlike the character in the mime) succeeds. Arsace's desire for Theagenes in Books 7 and 8 of the *Aethiopica* can also be placed in this category.²⁸ Smotric pointed out the specific points of contact between Arsace's story and the *Jealous Mistress* mime, including the infliction of corporal punishment on the recalcitrant slave²⁹ and the thwarted attempt to kill the rival in

²⁵ The other adultery tales differ in significant ways that take us beyond the scope of this chapter.

²⁶ Jones 1980: 245 compares Melite's gift of money to Clitophon to a payment for services rendered after he has made love with her, reducing him to the status of a male prostitute, even lower down the moral scale than the adulterer. I think, however, that the gift of money is more strongly linked to Clitophon's escape.

²⁷ As noted by Smotric 1967: 166–7. ²⁸ Smotric 1967: 164–6.

²⁹ Hld. *Aeth.* 8.5–6, cf. Cunningham 1987 (ed.): fr. 7 col. 2, 1.16.

love (8.9). The switching of the cups by a flustered slave (*ibid.*) may well also be a detail inspired by the mime.

In the case of the stepmother-stepson relationships it is far more difficult to know whether the mime is present or not. This is partly because we have no substantial example of this plot (with the exception of the hypothetical plot reconstructed by Wiemken) and partly because the high-literary model of the Phaedra-Hippolytus story is also available to complicate the relationship. In the tale told by Cnemon at the beginning of the *Aethiopica*, the stepmother herself points the reader directly to the tragic model by addressing Cnemon as 'My young Hippolytus' (1.10.2).³⁰ However, the presence of such alternative intertexts is not, I think, a reason to discount a relationship with the mime. Rather, the polyphonic nature of the novel as genre makes it entirely possible for the mimic model to be present alongside the tragic, giving rise to a multiple diffraction of meaning. (In Arsace's story, the role of the nurse Cybele and the account of Arsace's torments (7.9) also belong to the tragic register.) In the case of Cnemon's tale, reminiscences of the Phaedra plot coexist with elements that certainly seem to be more in keeping with mime than with tragedy. These latter include the complex chain of substitutions that lead to Demaenete's downfall as Thisbe lures her to a room on the pretext of an assignation with Cnemon but brings instead Cnemon's father who is led to believe that he has caught his wife *in flagrante*. In addition, Thisbe makes use of a piece of dramatic business in order to increase the effectiveness of the illusion, noisily slamming the door to create the impression that an imaginary lover has just escaped as the husband arrives (*Aethiopica*, 1.17.4). The use of the door, the comedy of mistaken identity and the figure of the cunning slave girl all point to a mimic inspiration in this section of Cnemon's tale.³¹

The significance of the mime

Rather than seeing the traces of the mime as signs of the 'influence' of contemporary cultural practice on the authors of the novels (or as evidence for the origin of the novel, as proposed by Smotric 1967), we should see them as the result of the authors' deliberate adaptation of patterns circulated on the stage. One effect of these mimic echoes is the deliberate injection of the low and the farcical into the novels in question. In Cnemon's story, for example, the presence of mime feeds into the portrayal of superficial,

³⁰ See Fusillo 1991: 39 on the relationship to tragedy.

³¹ Doors were a prominent part of the staging of the mime.

sensual 'Athenian love', as analysed by John Morgan 1989, in contrast to the chaste and constant ideal embodied by Charicleia and Theagenes. But we can go further, for if we consider that for Heliodorus and his readers the mime was above all a mimetic *practice*, familiar from the stage rather than from texts, the fact that these female characters imitate mime plots means that Athenian love in Cnemon's tale is an imitation of an imitation of the lowest type that is, moreover, strongly associated with deceit (at the level of the plot) and role-play (as a piece of drama).

The presence of mimic elements within Cnemon's tale also opens up the possibility of a metafictional reading in which the artifice of Thisbe's actions signals the artifice of both narrator and author. The fact, moreover, that Cnemon's tale mixes levels of representation, presenting a scenario inspired by mime as fact (within the fictional world of the novel) helps to prepare for the shock of the discovery of the dead Thisbe (who up until now has been merely a character in an internal narration) in the here and now of the novel's main action (2.5). We could see the inter-relationship between the figures of Demaenete and Arsace as a further instance of such metalepsis since a story pattern that is first presented within an internal narration comes to repeat itself, in modified form, in the main story, transforming Theagenes from listener/spectator of another's experience to the male lead in a very similar plot. So, rather than being merely a sign of the low and the erotic, the presence of mime complicates significantly the interpretation and presentation of Cnemon's tale and its place within the novel.

Furthermore, mime, as we saw, co-exists with tragedy among the inter-texts of Cnemon's tale which emerges as an artful blend of genres, combining the time-honoured and canonical drama of classical Athens (the dramatic time and place of his tale) with elements of a dramatic form contemporary with Heliodorus' readers. On one level, the combination is significant for the character of Demaenete who casts herself as the tragic heroine through her allusion to the *Hippolytus* only to find herself playing the role of the adulteress in a mime plot in her husband's eyes. If so, she reinstates her tragic role at the end of her story by committing suicide to avoid being taken to court, a resolution that would have belonged to mime rather than tragedy. Here, tragedy and mime are not simply juxtaposed but intricately interwoven into a single story. The result, I would suggest, is that the generic boundaries between tragedy and mime are broken down and the scandalous nature of the tragic plot with its illicit love and false accusation, which was easily overlooked in a genre enshrined by tradition,

is brought to the fore.³² The effect is thus to defamiliarise and call into question the canonical genre of tragedy for the elite reader and to imply that there is little to distinguish Athens, represented by Demaenete, from Persia, represented by Arsace. This distancing of traditional Hellenic culture is typical of Heliodorus' enterprise.³³ The further implication is that the novel surpasses not only mime but tragedy as well in its radical refiguring of culture and identity.³⁴

In the examples discussed above, the mime-like characters are either framed in internal narrations (like Cnemon's tale) or act as opponents of the couple and obstacles to their reunion (like Arsace). It seems therefore that, within the Greek romances, we can see the mimic universe as neatly opposed to the values embodied by the central couple. However, the opposition is not always so neat. Not surprisingly, the place of the mime allusions is strikingly different in Achilles Tatius' novel where the mimic elements are woven extremely closely into the main action. Whereas Arsace's passion for Theagenes is a by-product of his capture by the Persians, Melite is the driving force of the second half of *Leucippe and Clitophon* for, by transporting Clitophon from Alexandria to Ephesus, she enables, albeit unwittingly, his reunion with Leucippe. The transgressive here is drawn into the main plot. As we have already seen, it is Clitophon who finds himself in the role of the adulterer, but this role is adapted and refracted in the novel; at the point at which Thersander returns to play the role of cuckolded husband, Melite and Clitophon have not in fact had sex (as Melite laments) and, in any case, neither is aware that he is alive and that their liaison would be adulterous if it was consummated. This play with the schemata of the mime adds extra piquancy to the episode as Clitophon (the faithful partner of Leucippe) and Thersander (the apparently wronged husband) operate according to quite different scripts, a fact that is underlined by Clitophon's utter confusion as Thersander bursts in and attacks him.³⁵ As we saw, this is not the only point at which Thersander reveals himself to be a creator of (mime) plots. His plot to plant the false prisoner with his false tale

³² Choricus, *Or.* 8.3.6–40 points out the irony that schoolboys were encouraged to read tragedies whose actions were just as immoral as those of the mime. See Webb 2008: 112.

³³ See Whitmarsh 2011a: 108–35, particularly p. 128 on the association of mimetic identities with the Greek cultural sphere.

³⁴ See Bretzigheimer 1999 on the parallel way in which the Eteocles and Polynices plot is 'corrected' in the *Aethiopica*, with Fusillo 1991: 39–41.

³⁵ Achilles Tatius, *Clitophon and Leucippe*, 5.23.5: ἐγὼ δὲ ὥσπερ ἐν μυστηρίῳ μηδὲν ᾔδειν, μήθ' ὅστις ὁ ἀνθρώπος ἦν μήθ' οὐ χάριν ἔτυπεν, 'And I, as if in a mystery ritual, could understand nothing at all, neither who the man was, nor why he was hitting me.'

of Melite's murder of Leucippe both reflects the *Jealous Mistress* type of plot and is itself an ingenious creation, as the Greek vocabulary suggests.³⁶ Clitophon, however, willingly adopts the role of adulterer shortly afterwards when he does finally make love with Melite in the full knowledge that she is married to another man who is alive and well (5.27–6.1).

Elements of the *Jealous Mistress* plot therefore cluster around Melite: she takes the initiative and is rebuffed, while the desire to eliminate her rival is falsely attributed to her by others. But the comparison reveals the degree to which the standard character and plot types are adapted and remixed in this part of the novel. Melite is a widow (as far as she knows) when she starts to pursue Clitophon, not a married woman, and her response to him is characterised by tenderness rather than vindictiveness. It is after Thersander's return that she begins to resemble more closely the standard adulterous wife, the role imposed upon her by her husband.³⁷ Even then, however, the speech that finally seduces Clitophon is a declaration of (apparently) selfless love in which she gives up all claim to him, and paradoxically succeeds in getting what she wants (5.25–7).³⁸ Comparison with the basic schemata of the mime also underlines the degree to which Clitophon remains throughout an indefinable creature of paradox: a 'husband' who is no husband, as Melite laments (5.25.7–8), but who is persuaded to accept the temporary role of adulterer once it is offered to him and to have sex with Melite once there is no longer a question of marriage.³⁹

Mime, romance and adultery

In Clitophon's story, then, mime-inspired characteristics are far from being reserved for opponents of the couple's reunion, to the extent that the hero himself adopts the active role of the adulterer (rather than a purely passive role as victim of the other woman's desires and violent punishment). The Melite episode is not, however, the first time that the narrator takes on the role of adulterer in the novel, for Thersander's sudden interruption of the Clitophon-Melite couple is foreshadowed by Panthea's interruption of his night-time assignation with Leucippe (2.23.5–6). The account places emphasis on the doors through which Panthea bursts (the elaborate system

³⁶ Thersander's plan is said to be executed 'artfully' (τεχνικῶς) (7.1.4) and to be an artifice (τέχνασμα) (7.1.5).

³⁷ At 6.10.1 in particular, she is said to practise deceit.

³⁸ The figure of Lycaenion in Longus, *Daphnis and Chloe*, 3.15–19 is another example of the adulterous wife type (the younger woman from the city) who aids the couple.

³⁹ Achilles Tatius, *Clitophon and Leucippe*, 5.27.2: one of the justifications Clitophon cites is that 'the deed no longer constituted a marriage', οὐδὲ γάμος ἔστι τὸ πραττόμενον ἤν.

for locking them was described earlier at 2.19) and the noise and rapid actions of the scene, as Clitophon leaps up (ἀναπηδάω) from Leucippe's bed and legs it through the door (διὰ τῶν θυρῶν ἵεμαι δρόμῳ) 2.23.6. Panthea's subsequent beating (ῥαπίζω) of the maid Kleio and her bourgeois preoccupations with appearance and reputation, comically intermingled with tragic interjections (2.24), can be seen as further allusions to the mime. For her part, Leucippe's willing collusion in Clitophon's attempted seduction makes her more akin to the unfaithful wife of the mime than to the violated virgins of comedy or declamation. In this scenario, it is the mother, Panthea, who plays the role of the husband, bursting in on them just in time to prevent her daughter losing her virginity.

So, in Achilles Tatius' novel at least, the contrast between ideal love and the adulterous liaisons of the mime may not be as neat as it at first appears. The schemata of the erotic mime are both blended together and adapted (as we saw in the case of Melite). Moreover, they bleed into the main story (rather as the content of dreams and artworks constantly resurfaces in the real world of the novel).⁴⁰ Such interweaving is typical of Achilles Tatius' novel, but it may point us towards a deeper and troubling affinity between the romances in general and the basic plot of the adultery mime.⁴¹

On the surface, the romances and the mime belong to different moral universes and conform to different sets of norms: the relationships between the couples in the romances are in conformity with the law and the city (and often the will of the gods), leading as they do to legitimate marriage and the integration of the couple into the community. The lovers of the mime are set in opposition to all this. And, while the romances seem to embody a transcendent ideal of fidelity, the mime itself, as we saw, seems to have rejected the very possibility of a single ideal or set of norms.

Looked at from a different angle, however, there is a great deal in common between the adulterous pair of the stage and the couples of the romances. For one thing, the lovers of the adultery mime were among the few fictional representations of couples united by mutual desire to be found in antiquity. They presented a model of symmetrical desire, untrammelled by the social, familial and economic strictures of marriage. Their attraction for audiences was made clear by Augustine (*Conf.* 3.2) and the perspective on mime that he reveals is a surprising counterweight to the majority of our ancient sources who, implicitly or explicitly, take the side of the husband

⁴⁰ See Morales 2004: 156–84.

⁴¹ Here, it is particularly important to distinguish the adultery plot type from the jealous mistress or stepmother type in which the love is anything but mutual.

and of the established order of things, showing as it does how the adultery mime could be perceived as a love story as affecting as the novel. And if the adultery mime is similar to the true love of the novel, could it be the case that the love depicted in the novel has elements in common with the adultery of the mime? On a structural level, it is certainly true that both encounter opposition, from the husband in the case of the adulterous couple, or from the various opponents of the lovers in the romances. The comparison also brings out the extent to which the sudden passion felt by the heroes and heroines of the novel is presented as a threat to the established order, represented by their families and their plans (in the cases of Clitophon and Leucippe and of Charicleia)⁴² and their exclusive passion is, like the adulterous liaison, a deeply anti-social phenomenon that makes it necessary for them to step outside the established order. More troubling still, the connotations of trickery and illusion that surround the adulterous pair of the mime cannot be totally removed from the couples of the novel. This is a fact that Achilles Tatius, more than any other, plays upon, but as Whitmarsh has recently argued, Charicleia's identity is itself a product of artifice in Heliodorus' novel.⁴³

Conclusion

I would not like to stretch too far the implications of these parallels between the adultery mime and the novel. Above all, the couples of the mime are never integrated into their society as the couples of the romances are (or as we are told they are, for their happy future is never *shown* and, in the case of Clitophon, is put in doubt by the open structure of the novel). The mime is certainly not a key to the romances (still less a genetic explanation for their origins), but it is, I think, an important intertext that would have been immediately perceptible to audiences as familiar with it as the audiences of the imperial period (intellectuals included) undoubtedly were. As a popular performance art, above all, the mime enriches significantly the range of sources used by the novelists, extending them beyond the purely textual to include an art that was not restricted to the *pepaideumenoí* and that was familiar to audiences throughout the East and the West. This gives a more radical imprint to the polyphony that characterises the novel.

As we have seen, the mime is, to a certain extent, tamed and framed within the novel: Melite and the jealous women of Heliodorus are positively

⁴² In Chariton's novel, the couple's love disrupts Chaereas' social group, leading to the false accusation of adultery.

⁴³ Whitmarsh 2011a: 126–8.

genteel in comparison with the *Jealous Mistress* of *P. Oxy* 413 and the mimic plots are also, in this novel, largely confined to internal narrations and subplots. However, the juxtaposition of mimic and tragic elements (as in the Demaenete and Arsace stories) and the intrusion of the mimic into the universe of the novel serve to break down any such neat generic and social boundaries and to defamiliarise both the mime itself and its tragic parallels. In the case of Achilles Tatius, mime leaves its frame entirely to become a constant presence in its transmuted form, drawing the leading characters into its ambit. The very different ways in which the novelists exploit mime are striking in themselves but more striking still is the deep affinity that emerges between certain aspects of the mime and the ancient romance.

As if to confirm that affinity, one of the last tales of a wandering couple remaining faithful and chaste in the face of adversity to be composed in antiquity is John of Ephesus' story of the wandering mimes of Amida. Its hero and heroine are, in fact, a Christian couple disguised as mimes who suffer violence and narrowly escape separation when the woman is threatened with kidnap and forced prostitution. In John's story, this disguise is part of their utter abasement, a willing adoption of the role of the lowest of the low in order to prove their religious devotion. But we can see another logic at work in this role play, one that associates the mime and the true lover, this time in a reconfiguration of the story patterns of the romance into an Eastern, Christian narrative context.

Orality, folktales and the cross-cultural transmission of narrative

Lawrence Kim

Introduction

The last several decades have witnessed a renewed interest in exploring the remarkable similarities of motifs, plots and themes between Greco-Roman narrative and that of other ancient literary traditions (e.g., Egyptian, Persian, Jewish). If such commonalities are not coincidental or the result of independent development (and research indicates that they are not), it would be reasonable to raise the question of transmission, that is, *by what means* they passed from one culture to another. In the past, however, scholarly energies, caught up in the debate over the novel's origins, were more directed toward establishing the chronological priority of one narrative tradition (e.g., India, Egypt) over the others and less with the mechanics of actual cross-cultural transmission.¹ Even in more recent work one finds a studied vagueness on the issue (understandable perhaps, given the relative lack of evidence); at best there seems to be a presumption that written texts, specifically translations, provided the means by which stories travelled from one culture to another.² The purpose of this article, however, is to explore the possibility that such cross-cultural transmission in the Hellenistic and Imperial world could have occurred *orally* as well as through writing.

To outline some of the difficulties involved in such an inquiry, let us look at a particular case, taken from Lucian's *Toxaris*, a collection of tales about friendship, written in Greek around the mid to late second century CE. One story tells of three Scythian friends who go to extraordinary lengths to avenge an insult that one of them, Arsacomas, has suffered at the hands of the Bosporan king. Arsacomas had fallen in love with the king's daughter, Mazaea, but when he presented himself among her suitors, his poverty

¹ Winkler 1994.

² See, e.g., Braun 1938, Anderson 1984, Dieleman and Moyer 2010. In periods for which we have more evidence – late antiquity and the medieval era – translation played a crucial role in disseminating novels like the *Alexander Romance* or *Secundus the Silent Philosopher* over a vast geographical area.

was ridiculed by the king and his guests. His two friends now insist on helping him obtain revenge; while Arsacomas is raising an army to attack the Bosphorans, one of his comrades manages to get the king alone, cuts off his head and escapes; the other steals Mazaea from her new husband, the king of the Machlyans, and presents her, still a virgin, to Arsacomas. In the battle that follows, the Scythians defeat the much larger forces of the Machlyans, the Bosphorans, as well as the Sauromatians, all of whom are now commanded by Eubiotus, the brother of the Bosphoran king, who has taken the throne after the latter's death (*Tox.* 44–55).

This short narrative of romance and adventure raises two initial questions. First of all, is it based on an authentically 'Scythian' tale, or is it just a Greek fiction *about* Scythians,³ crafted by Lucian or someone else? Second, is the tale somehow related to the Greek novel? The drama is precipitated by Arsacomas' falling deeply in love with 'Mazaea, a tall and beautiful girl' upon seeing her at a banquet ('he fell in love, and was in a bad way', 44), and even though we never find out her feelings on the matter, the emphasis on love and virginity is unusual among the stories of male friendship told in the *Toxaris*. Moreover, the Greek novel known as *Calligone* is set in a comparable Scythian milieu: one papyrus fragment features the eponymous heroine, a Greek from the Black Sea city of Olbia, arguing vigorously with a man named Eubiotus as Sauromatian soldiers stand outside (cf. the Sauromatian commander of the same name in *Toxaris*).⁴

These slight, but intriguing, correspondences have convinced some scholars that the two stories must be connected.⁵ For instance, in their commentary on *Calligone* Susan Stephens and Jack Winkler tentatively propose a common source behind both tales, mapping out a plausible evolution from orally circulating Scythian/Sauromatian legend to written Greek narrative: there was 'at least one famous story, perhaps first popularised in legend and subsequently written down' which was 'transmitted by Greek writers' (possibly by 'Greeks settled in the Thracian Bosphorus') and 'served as a source for Lucian and [*Calligone*]'.⁶ Given the scarcity of evidence, it is impossible to confirm or refute this thesis. But it is

³ As Anderson 2004: 22, notes, 'this evidence can only underline that the Greeks *thought* there was a Scythian oral tradition extending to tales, especially of heroic abduction and rescue . . .' Cf. Ovid, *Ex Ponto* 3.2.59–90.

⁴ *PSI* 8.981 (= Pack² 2628); another fragment, *P. Oxy.* ined. 112/130(a), adds further details. See Stephens and Winkler 1995: 267–76, and López Martínez 1998: 149.

⁵ Rostovtzeff 1931: vol. 1, 98–9; Stephens and Winkler 1995: 268–70; Stephens 1996: 666–7; Anderson 2004: 21–2 and 153–8; *contra* Morgan 1998: 3350–1. On the general novelistic feel of the *Toxaris*, see Anderson 1976: 12–33; Jones 1986: 56–8.

⁶ Stephens and Winkler 1995: 270.

worth comparing it with how Lucian himself depicts the process of the tale's transmission. The *Toxaris* is a dialogue between a Greek, Mnesippus, and the eponymous Scythian, set somewhere in Greece and apparently in Lucian's own time. In order to settle a dispute about whether the Greeks honour friendship as much as the Scythians, Mnesippus and Toxaris each tell one another five 'contemporary' stories (τῶν καθ' ἡμᾶς: *Tox.* 10) of extraordinary acts of friendship among their countrymen, and the story of Arsacomas and Mazaea is one of those offered up by Toxaris. Lucian thus represents the transmission of the story from East to West as occurring *orally*, told, soon after the events in question, by a Hellenised Scythian to a Greek from Athens.⁷

Of course, Lucian's dialogue is fictional and steeped in literary convention; the scenario in *Toxaris* does not necessarily tell us anything about how Lucian himself learned of the story (if he did not invent it outright). But it provokes some thoughts: not only about the authenticity of Toxaris' tale as Scythian 'oral' legend, but also to what degree the kind of oral transmission depicted in the dialogue is a viable model of the way non-Greek narrative traditions made their way into Greek culture. Unlike Stephens and Winkler, who acknowledge the possible oral *origins* of the tale but presume that the material reached Lucian and the *Calligone*-author in written form, Lucian depicts the oral intercourse between East to West as very much a living phenomenon in his own day. It is not impossible that Stephens and Winkler are right, but it remains an open question whether their theory, of an 'early' oral tradition eventually supplanted by written narratives, is inherently more likely than the Lucianic model of oral transmission.

As this discussion shows, the 'oral' part of the term 'oral transmission' can be understood in two ways. In the simplest sense, a story is orally transmitted when one person *tells* it to another (or others), as Toxaris tells his tale to Mnesippus. We see examples of such narration depicted repeatedly in Greek and Latin literature from Homer onward, and Toxaris' narration of his Scythian 'romance' has famous precursors in the works of Herodotus, Plato, Plutarch, the novels and countless others. Moreover, Greek and Roman culture in all eras retained a considerable oral dimension, and even among the educated elite of Hellenistic Alexandria or the Imperial East, where books and reading were an integral part of *paideia*, much intellectual interaction took place through speaking and listening, whether in recitations, rhetorical performance, symposiastic discussion, or

⁷ Moreover, Toxaris reveals himself to have been a partial 'eyewitness' to the events at the end of the tale – he had fought alongside Arsacomas in the final victory (*Tox.* 54). On Toxaris, see Braund 2004.

philosophical education, as a glance at texts such as Plutarch's *Table Talk* or Philostratus' *Lives of the Sophists* shows.⁸

Orality in this sense, then, refers primarily to the *mode* in which stories were related to others, and says nothing about how the stories themselves arose. In fact, much of what was passed on in oral form in Imperial circles was originally written down. A perusal of Aulus Gellius' *Attic Nights* or Athenaeus' *Sophists at Dinner* reveals speakers who spout anecdotes explicitly culled (and cited) from their reading; similarly, a speech delivered orally to an audience by, say, Aelius Aristides, would most likely have been composed beforehand as a written text.⁹ The term 'oral transmission', however, often implies that there is something 'oral' about the origins and nature of the transmitted content itself: that it was not only 'performed', but also composed orally and circulated solely via oral channels.¹⁰ The Homeric epics in the early stages of their development are naturally the most familiar model, but more relevant for our purposes are folktales or *novelle* that, like the *Toxaris* tale (according to Stephens and Winkler), were 'first popularised in legend' before eventually finding their way into written texts, where they often retain markers of their traditional, popular and oral origins.

In this chapter, I address both of these aspects of oral transmission (although they naturally overlap). I begin by establishing the influence of oral traditional tales upon certain types of Greek and Roman narrative fiction and then move on to consider the modes of oral transmission – the people, the contexts – by which such content might have been disseminated. The evidence for *cross-cultural* transmission introduced there leads into a final section, where I return to the question of content and consider the kinds of specifically 'Eastern' stories that might have been orally transmitted to the West.

Ancient popular narrative and oral tradition

The study of Greek literature's debt to oral tradition has naturally focused on the era of nascent literacy – the archaic and early classical periods.

⁸ Cf. Harris 1989: 225–6; Thomas 1992: ch. 6; Valette-Cagnac 2007.

⁹ Not to mention recitations or public readings of literary texts. Cf. Goldhill 2009 on the complex interplay between literacy and oral performance in the Second Sophistic, and the growing body of scholarship interested in the interconnections and mutual influence of orality and textuality in the Roman Empire (e.g., the articles in Rimell 2007 on the ancient novel).

¹⁰ On the ambiguities of the term 'oral transmission', see Finnegan 1974 and 1988: 'the stricter definition of being transmitted unchanged orally for generations, besides being largely speculative, is difficult to apply and bedevilled by romantic overtones' (1988: 61).

Homer and Herodotus are the chief figures here, but I should emphasise that for my purposes, their status as oral performers and/or composers is less important than the fact that much of their *material* was taken from oral sources.¹¹ Herodotus' *Histories*, in particular, is an invaluable (and unique) compendium of legends, folktale-influenced anecdotes and *novelle* from all over the Eastern Mediterranean; moreover, Herodotus repeatedly emphasises the oral nature of his sources, and the tales themselves often retain signs of oral composition and style. After Herodotus, such explicit evidence for oral storytelling is much harder to come by. Over half a century ago, however, Sophie Trenkner presented a strong case for the influence of popular *novelle* on Classical Athenian literature – especially comedy and Euripidean tragedy – and recently scholars such as Graham Anderson and William Hansen have sought to demonstrate the underlying folkloric bases of a wide range of ancient texts, from myths to romances, in periods well after the spread of literacy.¹²

For the Hellenistic and Imperial eras, Greek and Latin prose narratives are among the most important witnesses to the continued influence of oral traditions, particularly those thought to have been written for popular (as opposed to elite) audiences.¹³ Notable examples are Greek fictional biographies (the *Life of Aesop*, the *Alexander Romance* and *Secundus the Silent Philosopher*), Jewish legendary narratives (*Tobit*, *Daniel* and *Joseph and Aseneth*), the Christian *Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles*, and the Latin novel *Apollonius, King of Tyre*.¹⁴ Popular texts such as these share several features that are also characteristic of oral narratives: anonymous authorship, an unrefined style, content incorporating folktale motifs (riddles, trickster-like activity, adultery) and an episodic structure, focused on an individual and showing signs of having been compiled from several different sources.¹⁵ While such features do not guarantee oral origins, they certainly increase their likelihood.¹⁶ Lawrence Wills, for instance, takes the closeness

¹¹ Aly 1921; Hansen 1997. On the question of whether Herodotus himself was an oral performer of his stories, see e.g., Stadter 1997 with previous scholarship at 13, n. 1.

¹² Trenkner 1958; Anderson 1984, 2000, 2006; Hansen 2002.

¹³ For a definition and discussion of ancient popular literature, see Hansen 1998.

¹⁴ The extant versions of all of these texts date from the Imperial period, with the exception of *Tobit* and *Daniel* (which are Hellenistic), although *Aesop* and *Alexander*, at least in some form, are clearly pre-Imperial. *Tobit*, moreover was likely originally written in Hebrew; on its complicated transmission, see Fitzmyer (2003) and Weeks *et al.* (2004).

¹⁵ For discussion of the Greek texts, see in general, Selden 2010; for specific texts, see Gallo 1996 on *Secundus* and *Alexander*, Konstan 1998 on *Alexander*, Thomas 2003 on the *Acts of Peter*, Jouanno 2009 and Karla 2009b on *Aesop* and *Alexander*, and. On *Apollonius*, see Perry 1967: 294–324; Ruiz Montero 1983; Panayotakis 2007.

¹⁶ In fact, recent work on popular texts (Konstan 1998 calls them 'open texts'; Jouanno 2009 uses 'patchwork novels'; Selden 2010 refers to 'text networks') has shown that they are characterised by

of Tobit's plot motifs with that of known oral folktales and its author's habit of 'incorporat[ing] insertions without smoothing over the transitions' (214) as signs that the written novel has 'evolved' out of an oral tale (91).¹⁷

It is difficult, however, to prove definitively that a given episode in a written text is indebted to oral tradition, because stories circulating orally in popular milieux leave traces only when they make their way into written texts, and there is thus little, if any, independent evidence of their existence. One method commonly employed to circumvent this problem involves comparing the ancient written version with analogous oral tales recorded more recently and in a wide enough range of locales to qualify as 'international'. The premise here is that if significant structural similarities between an international folktale and an ancient story are detected, one can conclude that the ancient version (even if it is the earliest recorded) most likely derives from a pre-existing traditional tale, rather than acting as the 'source' for later variations. For example, Hansen has argued persuasively that an episode in the *Life of Aesop* where Aesop proves that his master Xanthus' dog, rather than his wife, is the one who 'truly loves' him, is a version of the international tale known as *Best Friend, Worst Enemy*, in which a man, when asked to produce his best friend and worst enemy, demonstrates that the former is his dog, and the latter his wife.¹⁸ Unless one accepts the extremely unlikely possibility that all of the modern oral versions somehow derive from the *Life of Aesop*, one can plausibly hypothesise that the novel version is but one, written, instantiation of a longstanding oral traditional tale that was circulating in antiquity before the author of *Aesop* adapted it.¹⁹ The method needs to be employed with care, but given what we know about the remarkable persistence and longevity of orally circulating tales and the nature of popular narrative,²⁰ the premises on

the narrative fluidity and lack of fixity that we associate with oral narratives even when they circulate in writing; each 'performance' or transcription results in a different text, depending on the context for which it is produced.

¹⁷ Wills 1995. The same goes for Daniel 1–6, which Wills believes is 'likely derived from oral legends of the pious heroes, legends that circulated independently in the fourth to third centuries BCE in the eastern Diaspora' (38). Cf. Braun 1938: 44–104 on the transformation of the Potiphar's Wife story 'from the *novella* or legend [Genesis], by way of the popular romance [*Testament of Joseph*], to the rhetorical romance [Josephus' *Jewish Antiquities*]' (104).

¹⁸ Aarne-Thompson 921B; Hansen 2002: 49–54. Hansen's book, to which this section is deeply indebted, offers specific arguments in support of this method (often taken for granted by practitioners), as well as the persuasive demonstrations of its validity, through an impressive comparison of nearly a hundred examples of ancient tales with their international folkloric analogues. Cf. the remarks of Walter 1998 on the folkloric bases of medieval literature.

¹⁹ The presumption is that the tale proceeded afterwards to circulate orally in popular milieux independently of the ancient written version.

²⁰ Cf. the remarkable case of *The Poor Man of Nippur*, an Assyrian cuneiform version of *The Poor Man Cheated of His Oxen* (Aarne-Thompson 1538), discovered in 1955 and dating to c. 700 BCE (but

which it is based are credible, and I take it as a working hypothesis that ancient stories evincing strong parallels with recognised international tales most likely originated in an oral milieu.²¹

Although ancient popular novels frequently incorporate and adapt oral folktales and *novelle*, it would be wrong to call the novels themselves 'oral literature' or 'oral texts'. No single oral narrative was the likely inspiration behind any of the novels; nor are the written versions we possess mere transcriptions of a series of episodic oral anecdotes and tales. For example, even though many individual episodes in the *Life of Aesop* can be connected to traditional folktale types,²² the earliest version of *Aesop* we possess (*Vita G*, first century CE) is clearly the product of writing; the anonymous author has compiled and adapted a variety of Aesop traditions and episodes into a semi-coherent whole.²³ Rather than 'oral literature', then, we might call *Aesop* 'oral-derived' in that it owes much to oral traditions, but remains a written text.

Nevertheless, it is important to recognise the essential fluidity between oral and written that characterises the formative history of the traditions contributing to popular novels.²⁴ While it might be possible to trace the moments when particular strands of the 'oral' Aesop tradition were written down, or when a complete version of *Aesop* was put together,²⁵ there is no reason to assume that the act of fixing part of the tradition in writing

possibly copied from a much older Babylonian text). The tale is found in substantially the same form in the *Arabian Nights* and in oral versions recorded as late as the 1940s, almost three millennia later. See Gurney 1956 and 1972; Jason and Kempinski 1981.

²¹ Criticism of this method has focused on the possible oral, folkloric origins of the Cupid and Psyche story in the *Metamorphoses*. Fehling 1977 is the most vigorous sceptic, but see also Dowden 1985 on Scobie 1983 and Schlam 1993 (referred to with approval by Zimmerman 2004: 12). Defenders include Swahn 1955; Walsh 1970: 190–223; and Hansen 2002: 100–14.

²² Konstantakos 2006 on *Aesop* 75–6; Hansen 2002: 49–54 (*Aesop* 44–50; discussed above); 234–40 (*Aesop* 11–64); 251–5 (*Aesop* 131). Moreover, a significant section of the *Aesop* shares its plot with that of *Ahiqar*, a very old Near Eastern legend (see below). Another possible parallel proposed by Hansen is less convincing: 2002: 97–9.

²³ As Holzberg 1993, Merkle 1996, and Konstantakos 2006 have shown, the *Life* as we have it has been assembled with a certain amount of artistic skill.

²⁴ Thomas 2003: 14, notes that it is often impossible to tell 'whether one text is appropriating another by means of textually based procedures or by knowledge from memory . . .' and that 'the distinction between *textual process* and *memory*, rather than written source and oral source, might be closer to the conceptual framework of the authors and audiences of the ancient world' (14). For Thomas, the *Acts of Peter* is the result of reworking both written sources and traditions incorporated via memory.

²⁵ E.g., Adrados 1979: 106; 'a changing, oral tradition' dating as far back as the fifth century BCE was only 'fixed in writing for the first time' in the first century CE; M. L. West 1984: 122: the Samian part of the *Life* dates from the mid-fifth century BCE; Perry 1962: 332–4, on the biographical information recorded in Demetrius of Phalerum's late fourth-century BCE collection of Aesopic fables. It also seems clear that various episodes underwent considerable change as time went on – e.g., those involving Xanthus are set in a Hellenistic milieu but could have been adapted from anecdotes told in earlier eras.

put an immediate stop to oral activity, or even to the production of other written versions.²⁶ One should thus imagine multiple clusters of Aesop lore, simultaneously circulating orally and in writing, perhaps even re-entering oral tradition from written texts.²⁷ The episodes, *novelle*, anecdotes and motifs embedded in the written texts of ancient popular narratives most likely derive from a complex blend of oral and written sources, possibly arising from different cultures and in different eras.²⁸ We may not be able to recover, reconstruct, or date these traditions with any precision, but we should not discount the likelihood of their influence.

Sophisticated literary adaptations of popular oral tradition

In addition to such oral-derived popular narratives, several more sophisticated literary novels – e.g., Petronius' *Satyricon*, Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*, Lucian's *Lover of Lies* – show close, yet fundamentally different, connections to the world of oral storytelling. On the one hand, the tales included in these texts are generally popular, or 'low', in nature – 'Milesian' narratives involving magic, the supernatural, sex and violence – and have striking analogues in folk traditions from around the world.²⁹ The *novelle* in the *Satyricon*, such as the *Widow of Ephesus* and the *Pergamene Boy*, are well-known examples,³⁰ while the *Metamorphoses* as a whole has been seen as reflecting 'the same wide field of oral folk-narrative' as the *Life of Aesop*;³¹ a similar relationship to popular accounts of the supernatural

²⁶ Anderson 1996; Winkler 1985: 279: '... we have to posit a repertoire of episodes, featuring Aesop as a fixed character, that undergoes continuous adaptation, contraction, and expansion at the hands of numerous storytellers'. A good account in Hägg 1997: 177–86. At some point, of course, stories about Aesop stop being told and he becomes primarily a written phenomenon, but this moment need not coincide with that of the writing down of the *Life*. On this, see now Kurke (2011), 1–49.

²⁷ Cf. Wills 1995 on how oral legends and folktales underlying Tobit and Daniel have 'been processed through a new medium' and combined with written texts and tales (214); Konstantakos 2006 on the interplay between oral and written in the circulation and development of 'adultery tales' in antiquity.

²⁸ The same could be said, more or less, for the *Alexander Romance*, *Secundus* and the *Apocryphal Acts*.

²⁹ For a broad definition of 'Milesian' tales, see the selection in Ferrari 1995. On the genre, see, among many treatments, Harrison 1998a, Jenson 2004: 245–301 and Bowie in this volume.

³⁰ On Petronius' *novelle*, see Walsh 1970: 10–17 and Anderson 1999.

³¹ Winkler 1985: 283; cf. Scobie 1975: 35: 'a repository of folktales'. A specific example: Konstantakos 2006: 589 attributes the parallels between the *Life of Aesop* 75–6 and Apuleius' *Tale of the Tub* episode (9.5–7) to their shared use of 'motifs and episodes [drawn] from the rich field of ancient folk narrative'. Even the primary narrative of the *Metamorphoses*, the Ass-Tale which Apuleius took over from the Greek *Metamorphoses*, is closely tied to oral folk traditions concerning witchcraft and metamorphosis (Scobie 1975: 26–46; 1983); indeed, 200 years later, legends of witches transforming travellers into beasts of burden were still being told orally in Italy, as attested by Augustine (*De civ. dei* 18.18).

could be claimed for the *Lover of Lies*.³² The tales in these works, however, rather than being directly incorporated into the plot or adapted to the main characters (although this does occur, especially in Apuleius), are usually stand-alone stories embedded within the narrative; significantly they are often depicted as told by one character to another or others, as if the author wished to emphasise their oral nature.³³ All three authors thus manage to mix 'high' literary style with the 'low' subject matter associated with popular culture and oral circulation.

As I noted in my discussion of the *Toxaris* tale, even when scholars accept the oral or folkloric origins of a story found in elite texts, they tend to assume that it must have reached its respective author via written sources.³⁴ It bears repeating that, in the absence of evidence, the transmission of the tale to the author in question could just as easily have been oral.³⁵ In fact insisting upon an 'either/or' choice between oral and written transmission potentially misrepresents the complexity of how *novelle* made their way into sophisticated literature.³⁶ Consider the well-known 'Milesian' tale, *The Widow of Ephesus*, which Petronius has Eumolpus tell to a group assembled on a ship (*Satyricon* III). There are two other, roughly contemporary, ancient versions: one in the fables of Phaedrus, a Greek freedman writing in Latin (*App.* 15), and another in Greek from the *Life of Aesop* (129). The relation between these three texts, and the origins of the tale, have been fiercely debated: leading contenders as Petronius' 'source' are Aristides' (lost) *Milesian Tales* or an earlier collection of Aesopic fables.³⁷ But the fact that oral versions of the tale have been collected from as far afield as nineteenth-century Russia and twentieth-century North Africa,³⁸

³² The *Lover of Lies* features many tales (like the *Sorcerer's Apprentice*: 33–7) for which striking analogues can be found, not only in later tales told in both Western and Eastern cultures, but also in variant forms in other ancient texts – facts pointing to oral circulation. See now Ogden 2007; on ancient ghost stories, Felton 1999.

³³ Salles 1981. There is some speculation that Aristides' *Milesian Tales* framed its narratives in a similar way: Harrison 1998a.

³⁴ E.g., Rademacher 1927 on the Hyperborean Mage story in Luc. *Philops.* 13–15 (on which see now Ogden 2007: 105–29).

³⁵ Thomas 2003: 14: 'For less exact degrees of "dependence", however, it is nearly impossible to distinguish whether an author was using an oral or written source... Citing a *written* text by memory, whether from a text read or heard, and citing an *orally circulating* tale would look the same, and perhaps, for the ancient world, have nearly the same import.'

³⁶ Cf. Finnegan 1988: 57: 'the relation between oral and written forms need not just be one of parallel and independent coexistence, far less of mutual exclusion, but can easily exhibit constant and positive interaction. Indeed it becomes clear that this sort of situation may well be just as normal and characteristic a setting for oral literature as the extreme type A "primitive" and non-literate culture posited in the classical dichotomy.'

³⁷ On Demetrius of Phalerum's collection of Aesop's fables as possible source, see Perry 1962: 329–30.

³⁸ Ure 1956; Hansen 2002: 266–79.

coupled with the existence of these three ancient variants (in texts with close ties to popular culture), strongly suggests that the tale was circulating orally before, during and after Petronius' time.³⁹ And even if an oral version of *The Widow of Ephesus* had been recorded in writing by Aristides or some other author, the story itself in all likelihood continued to circulate orally in antiquity after it had been written down for the first time.⁴⁰ There is no reason to presume that Petronius encountered the story in writing; he could very well have heard it told, or even read and heard different versions at different times.

In the *Metamorphoses* Apuleius even provides some hints that the practice of recording 'living' oral traditions was current, through his repeated references to adaptations of oral *fabulae* into literary form.⁴¹ At 6.25, after hearing the old woman tell the Cupid and Psyche tale, Lucius famously regrets 'not having notebooks and a pen (*pugillares et stilum*) to write down such a good story (*tam bellam fabellam praenotarem*)' and at 6.29, Charite proclaims that her escape on donkey-back 'will be seen and heard in stories and though unsophisticated will be perpetuated by the pens of the learned' (*uisetur et in fabulis audietur doctorumque stilis rudis perpetuabitur historia* . . .). Later, at 8.1, the slave begins his report of the tragic death of Charite with the words: 'I shall tell you (*referam*) what happened from the beginning, events which the more learned (*merito doctiores*), those to whom fortune has given pens (*stilos*), can wrap in paper as an example of history (*in historiae specimen chartis involuere*).' Apuleius thus not only depicts a series of oral tales as being told within his narrative frame, but also has the narrators themselves anticipate the transformation of these originally oral narratives into written texts. Again, as with Lucian's *Toxaris*, these examples do not prove that the tales in question had been transmitted orally to Apuleius, but they do show that the transfer of an entertaining narrative from oral to written form was envisaged as a contemporary phenomenon.

There is some evidence that other Imperial authors demonstrated a similar interest in collecting, publishing and adapting orally circulating stories and legends. One such case is Xenophon of Ephesus, whose *Anthia and*

³⁹ Hansen 2002: 272, who further notes, 'because the novella has been so frequently anthologised it has probably reentered oral tradition sporadically from literary sources, so that the tale has been transmitted both orally and literarily'.

⁴⁰ Many modern 'urban legends' continue to be told orally as 'true' well after they have been adapted in a literary work: for example, a variant of the legend known as *The Surpriser Surprised* appears in Carson McCullers' *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter* in 1940, yet was still being told as a 'real' contemporary event in the 1970s: Brunvand 1981: 148–9.

⁴¹ Fowler 2001. As Bitel 2001 notes, Apuleius consistently uses *fabula* to denote oral discourse; cf. his list at 145–6, n. 26.

Habrocomes has been the subject of much scholarly debate regarding its relation to orality.⁴² Unlike the popular works listed above, Xenophon's novel is not anonymous (although some see 'Xenophon' as a pseudonym) and has a more complicated, albeit still episodic, plot, focused on two protagonists – the *Liebespaar* – rather than one. Nevertheless, it exhibits popular stylistic and formal features that set it apart from the other canonical Greek romances, for which indications of direct oral influence are generally lacking.⁴³ As we have noted, such features need not point to an orally composed or circulating tale as the written text's immediate source, but they do suggest the possibility of an oral, folkloric background at a further, yet still reasonably close, remove. Moreover, some of the content also bears traces of oral origins. Several episodes are very obviously based on folktale plots, especially Near Eastern 'court' tales, such as the two variants of the Potiphar's Wife tale (in which Habrocomes is approached by Manto and Cyno respectively). Two other stories are self-standing *novelle* in a Milesian vein: one concerning star-crossed lovers, the other a Sicilian fisherman and his mummified wife.⁴⁴ The best explanation of this hodgepodge is not that Xenophon has written down a version of a single orally composed narrative, as James O'Sullivan has argued,⁴⁵ but rather that he has incorporated a variety of oral tales into his ideal love novel, with uneven results. The stylistic peculiarities can be explained, as Consuelo Ruiz Montero does, by postulating that Xenophon is attempting to retain the flavour and cadences of the originally oral rhythms of such tales.⁴⁶

In support of this hypothesis, Ruiz Montero points to two other contemporary, albeit non-fictional, works that evince similar stylistic characteristics and seem also to be adapting oral material, primarily of a local nature: Plutarch's *Narratives of Love* and parts of Pausanias' *Periegesis*.⁴⁷ Like Xenophon, these authors employ 'a rhetorical *mimesis*' of the oral 'style' in which the stories were originally transmitted, and Ruiz Montero concludes

⁴² The connections claimed by Anderson 1984 are distant indeed; while there is no doubt that certain plot motifs and themes may *ultimately* have originated in oral tales, the degrees of separation are far greater than in the popular or the 'Milesian' novels.

⁴³ Often noted, e.g., by Reardon 2004; Ruiz Montero 2003a: 44: '*kai*-connectives, historical presents, parataxis, and stereotyped formulae . . . continual repetitions of all sorts at different levels, the lack of motivation in the plot, the contradictions, the information gaps, the break-neck pace of the different episodes, the psychological superficiality of its characters (divided into good and bad) who appear in droves and are all given names'.

⁴⁴ Xen. *Anth.* 3.1–2; 5.1. See Ruiz Montero 1996: 64.

⁴⁵ O'Sullivan 1995; although his position is more nuanced than later critics have assumed.

⁴⁶ Ruiz Montero 2003a.

⁴⁷ Ruiz Montero 2003b; examples of such tales in Pausanias include the ghost story at 6.6.7–11 and the love story of Coresus and Callirhoe at 7.21.1. Cf. Ruiz Montero 2003c on 'popular' style in Greek literature more broadly.

that this correspondence intimates that Xenophon's material could possibly have derived from local, oral traditions in Greece and Asia Minor.⁴⁸ The relevant point here, however, is that such works furnish additional evidence for a flourishing body of orally circulating tales in the Imperial period⁴⁹ – not only folktales, fables and 'Milesian' tales, but also stories of the supernatural and local legends of love and adventure. Such oral traditions find their way into popular literature, but also become the object of interest for certain elite intellectuals – novelists, historians, philosophers – who receive, collect and write them down, thus transmitting them to an even wider audience.

Contexts for oral transmission and performance

In what contexts and from what sort of informants, then, might such oral tales have been collected? And by whom were they disseminated, or transmitted to others? Scholars of ancient oral traditions tend to concentrate on figures who could have acted as contacts between popular and elite circles. One such group consists of local informants, who would have been the primary sources for Pausanias and other 'collectors' of local traditions, or guides at various tourist sites, such as those disparaged by Lucian in *Lover of Lies* and by Plutarch in *On the Pythian Oracles*.⁵⁰ Somewhat more elusive are itinerant storytellers – *fabulatores* or *aretalogoi* – disseminating popular folktales and legends as they moved from city to city; the evidence for their existence, however, is extremely scanty.⁵¹ Women are also often mentioned as preservers of oral traditions in antiquity, whether in their capacity as child-rearers – nurses telling children Lamia-tales or *Märchen* (like *Cupid and Psyche*) – or as domestic workers – weavers singing myths or songs to while away the time.⁵² An example outside of a strictly female milieu is found in Xenophon's *Anthia and Habrocomes*, where Habrocomes and Hippothous, as they are drinking at an inn, hear of Anthia's travails

⁴⁸ Quotation from Ruiz Montero 2003a: 60; on Xenophon and local history, 57. On the connections between local history and romance in the Hellenistic period, see Lavagnini 1921 and Whitmarsh 2010c: 402–4; for Herodotus, Luraghi 2001.

⁴⁹ Ruiz Montero 2003b: 231; 2003a: 47: 'the circulation of motifs and folk-tales amongst different cultures and countries was profuse'.

⁵⁰ Pretzler 2005, Ruiz Montero 2003a, Jones 2001; Luc. *Philops.* 4; Plut. *Pyth. Or.* 2 (395A).

⁵¹ Salles 1981; Scobie 1983: 11–16.

⁵² Scobie 1983: 16–30; Anderson 2006: 56–8; Ziolkowski 2002; Heath 2011. Chariton's *Callirhoe* has been connected with oral *performance*, a written text which, as Hägg 1994 has suggested, was read out loud to groups, and was designed to be performed in such a manner; S. West 2003a envisages women engaged in communal household tasks such as weaving as an ideal audience for such readings.

at Tarsus (which have already passed into local lore) from an old woman named ChrySION (3.9). Another example of a public, impromptu narrator of recent events is the slave who describes the tragic end of Charite and Tlepolemus to his compatriots in the *Metamorphoses* (8.1–14), and one could envisage how similar scenarios involving skilled, non-professional storytellers in various contexts might have contributed to the creation and diffusion of local legends.

As these last examples illustrate, our main evidence concerning context often comes from the same written texts that preserve the *novelle* themselves.⁵³ As I mentioned above, the tales embedded in the narratives of the novels invoke the world of oral storytelling not only by replicating its content but also by re-creating the scenarios in which such tales might have been told. The majority of these storytelling moments occur in one of two circumstances: during travel (on the road, at inns, aboard ship) and at private gatherings, such as banquets or symposia, hosted by a member of the elite. In the first category we can include the two stories from Xenophon and Apuleius mentioned in the last paragraph, as well as Aristomenes' tale in the *Metamorphoses*, Eumolpus' *Widow of Ephesus* and *Pergamene Boy* in the *Satyrica*,⁵⁴ and those stories in Ps.-Lucian's *Amores* that are told during a sightseeing trip to Cnidus. Banquets are the scene of Thelyphron's tale in the *Metamorphoses* and Niceros' werewolf account in the *Satyrica* (61.6–62.14); a less formal get-together is the one at Eucrates' house that prompts the competitive supernatural tale-telling in *Lover of Lies*.⁵⁵ Another feature that characterises many of these stories is their insistence on truth; despite their traditional origins, almost all are related as something that *really* happened, whether to the narrators themselves, or to someone they know.⁵⁶ The prevalence of these two types of tale-telling scenarios in ancient fiction most likely reflects the real-life importance played by travellers and social gatherings in orally introducing entertaining narratives from elsewhere to 'Greece'. As an example, I want to take a look at a text that provides some particularly suggestive illustrations of how this might have worked in practice: Plutarch's *On the Decline of Oracles*, one of a series of his dialogues

⁵³ Dupont 1999: 179–204. Tarrant 1997: 191, notes that the stories in *Lover of Lies* 'are amusing primarily because they are rooted in the familiar realities of story-telling'.

⁵⁴ On Eumolpus as storyteller, see Beck 1979.

⁵⁵ Plato's *Symposium*, of course, is an early example in which such gatherings are depicted as the backdrop not only for philosophical discussion, but also for the exchange of narratives.

⁵⁶ *Cupid and Psyche* stands out here, both as a tale told in an unusual consolatory context by a woman to a girl, and for its 'fairy-tale'-like content. On the difficulty of categorising oral tales as 'believed legends', see Dégh 1996.

(*Amatorius*, *Table-Talk*, etc.) that offer a vivid image of Imperial elite society.⁵⁷

One of the stories told in *Decline*, which depicts a gathering of intellectuals at Delphi in 83/84 CE, reports the death of Pan, and is an excellent ancient example of an allegedly 'historical' account that turns out to be derived from a widely known folktale.⁵⁸ The story is told by Philip, who has, in typical urban legend fashion, not witnessed it himself, but heard it from a 'friend': his teacher Epitherses. Epitherses was on a ship bound for Italy; as it passed the island of Paxi, a voice was heard 'loudly calling Thamous, an Egyptian pilot, not known by name even to many on board'. After being called three times, Thamous responded; the voice then said, 'When you come opposite to Palodes, announce that Great Pan is dead.' When they reached the Palodes, Thamous did as he was told, and there 'was a great cry of lamentation, not of one person, but of many [. . .] The story was soon spread abroad in Rome and Thamous was sent for by Tiberius Caesar, who became so convinced of the truth of the story that he caused an inquiry and investigation to be made about Pan.' The tale, which was to gain much notoriety among Christian authors for its intimations of the death of paganism, is an adaptation of a folktale, recorded in a wide range of locales, in which an enigmatic injunction to travel somewhere and announce the death of an unknown figure incites the unexpected lamentation of a group of beings (fairies, cats, etc.); the parallels even extend to the odd alliteration (Paxi, Palodes, Pan) and the traditional folktale repetition of three.⁵⁹

In the dialogue, this folktale has become a historical event, dressed up with realistic detail and references to 'real' people. Moreover, it is depicted as a living oral tradition, told by Philip to an enthralled group of at least six others, including Plutarch's brother Lamprias and his teacher Ammonius. Does this represent a reasonable approximation of the kind of story that might be told on such occasions? On the one hand, it is difficult to imagine that the stylistically homogeneous and intricately complex language of the speakers in Plutarch's dialogues approximates actual conversation; Plutarch's dialogues present an unabashedly idealising portrait of his own intellectual circles. But the literary dialogue had always required a certain suspension of disbelief from its readers; after all, a common conceit (à la Plato) is that the entire text, replete with embedded stories and speeches,

⁵⁷ On the verisimilitude of Plutarchan dialogue, see Tarrant 1997; in broad terms, I share his belief that ' . . . much of what Plutarch wrote in dialogue form was modelled on types of oral learned activity, from after-dinner discussion and entertaining narratives to the more serious philosophical debates' (186).

⁵⁸ Hansen 2002: 131–6. ⁵⁹ Borgeaud 1983.

is the transcription of a narrative being told to another listener.⁶⁰ The *Death of Pan*, at any rate, is different from the long intricately argued philosophical speeches in Plutarch's dialogues; like Eumolpus' Milesian tales in the *Satyrical*, it is the standard length of a *novella*, about a page (419B–D), and for all of its learned accoutrements betrays a basic folkloric structure. And while we do not know where the story originated, or how it made its way into elite circles, the dialogue provides a glimpse of the way social gatherings functioned as venues for the introduction and oral transmission of such tales.

Travel also plays a large role in *On the Decline of Oracles*. Philip's story, or at least Epitherses' original, is a traveller's tale; although it is not told while travelling like the examples from the novels I mentioned above, it relates something that happened during Epitherses' travels (in this case, on a sea voyage). The literary association between travel and storytelling is as old as the *Odyssey*, and real-life travellers such as Herodotus and Ctesias or Iambulus and Euhemerus, whether reporting their own (invented?) experiences or relaying the legends and stories of other cultures that they had learned on their journeys, played a central role in the transmission and dissemination of legends and tales in antiquity.⁶¹ A good, if historically questionable, example focused on oral transmission is that of Solon, as depicted in Plato's *Timaeus* (20d–26d), who brings back the story of Atlantis from Egypt to Athens, where it is preserved orally down to the days of his great-grandson Critias.

The company in *On the Decline of Oracles* includes several men who are similarly returning to Greece after having travelled to far-flung lands in the spirit of philosophical and scientific inquiry: Demetrius the grammarian, who had journeyed to Britain 'for the sake of inquiry and observation (ἱστορίας καὶ θεᾶς ἕνεκα)' and 'Cleombrotus of Sparta, who had made many excursions in Egypt and about the land of the Cave-Dwellers, and had sailed beyond the Persian Gulf; his travels were not for business, but he was fond of seeing things and of acquiring knowledge (φιλοθεάμων καὶ φιλομαθής) . . .' (*De def. orac.* 2; 410A). Like Solon, the two pass on tales that they have learned in their travels from their interrogation of the non-Greek inhabitants of distant regions. Demetrius reports a story about the sleeping god Cronus he had heard from 'the people of an island' near

⁶⁰ Tarrant 1997 believes that Plutarch's dialogic works 'emerged out of an intellectual background where the telling of long and detailed stories was routine' (189), but emphasises that the dialogues were neither meant to be read aloud nor transcripts of oral performance.

⁶¹ As these examples suggest, the association of travel narratives and fiction (or lies) is similarly well attested: Romm 1992; Whitmarsh 2010c: 408–9.

Britain (28; 420A)⁶² and the dialogue begins with Cleombrotus relating 'a story worthy of special consideration' that Egyptian priests had imparted to him when he was visiting the shrine of Ammon in Egypt (2; 410B). Later on, at 421A–B, Cleombrotus mentions another more exotic story that he had learned from 'a foreigner', who nevertheless spoke to him in Doric, '[in an area] near the Persian Gulf'. What is striking in *Decline* is the depiction, not only of popular oral content (the *Death of Pan*) told in a lofty elite setting, but also of the oral transmission by travellers of foreign lore and narratives.⁶³ It reflects a thriving Imperial traffic in oral narratives as well as a particular fascination with those originating outside of the Greco-Roman world.

We can see similar scenarios mixing oral tales, travel and foreigners elsewhere in Imperial Greek literature: dialogues like Lucian's *Toxaris* and *Anacharsis* (which feature Scythian travellers in Greece) or his *Lover of Lies*, in which the various Greek narrators tell of their meetings with Babylonians, Hyperboreans, Syrians from Palestine, Arabs and Egyptians.⁶⁴ In another 'oral' genre, oratory, we find Lucian, in *Heracles*, reporting to his audience a conversation he has with a Celt about a painting of the hero; Dio Chrysostom, in his *Trojan Oration*, claims to reveal the 'true' story of the Trojan War he has learned from an Egyptian priest, and in his *Borysthenitic Oration* regales the Olbians with a cosmic Zoroastrian myth that he has heard from Persian magi. While some of these examples could be chalked up to literary convention, or self-conscious fictions (since voyages to foreign lands were almost *de rigueur* in biographies of Greek 'wise men' like Homer, Pythagoras and Plato), there remains a pervasive notion that travellers were an ideal means of transmitting knowledge from one culture to another.

⁶² Cf. Sulla's tale of islands northwest of Britain (*De facie* 941a–945d).

⁶³ Cf. Plut. *De deo Socratis* 576C; 577F–578A: Simmias returns from Egyptian Thebes 'full of all sorts of myths and foreign stories' learned from the priests there.

⁶⁴ Luc. *Philops.* 11–12: 'a Babylonian man, one of the so-called Chaldaeans'; 13: 'when I first saw the foreign stranger (τὸν ξένον τὸν βάρβαρον) fly – he said he was from the Hyperboreans...'; 16: 'Everyone knows about the Syrian from Palestine, the "sophist" regarding exorcism'; 24: 'at the same time turning the gem that the Arab gave me to the inside of my finger...'; 31: Arignotus relates how he has 'a great number of Egyptian books on such matters [ghosts, etc.]' and how he 'brought into play my most frightful imprecation, speaking the Egyptian language (αἰγυπτιαῖζων τῇ φωνῇ)'; 33–4: 'When I [Eucrates] was living in Egypt during my youth (my father had sent me travelling for the purpose of completing my education) ... But on the voyage up, there chanced to be a man with us from Memphis, one of the scribes of the temple (*hierogrammateus*), wonderfully learned, familiar with all of Egyptian *paideia*. He was said to have lived underground for twenty-three years in their sanctuaries, learning magic from Isis.' Arignotus subsequently identifies this man as his own teacher, Pancrates!

The travellers in these texts belong to a group of figures that we might term, after the folklorist Carl von Sydow, ‘active bearers’ of narratives, that is, particularly skilled storytellers that are crucial for the dissemination of oral tales from one culture to another.⁶⁵ Although many members of a community may be familiar with a given tale, its successful oral transmission elsewhere tends to rely on contact between an ‘active bearer’ from the original community and an ‘active bearer’ in another area, who will spread the tale among his own community. So for each Greek traveller in the examples listed above, there is a corresponding ‘native’ who is just as essential for the transfer of knowledge, a (usually unnamed) Hellenised non-Greek, whether Egyptian, Celtic, Indian, Syrian, Scythian, etc. On occasion, it is the foreign figure who does the travelling; in *Toxaris*, the Scythian has come to Greece and tells his stories in Greek, as does the Egyptian priest Calasiris in Heliodorus’ *Aethiopica*. Indeed, many of the novelists and writers themselves are Hellenised ‘foreigners’; self-confessedly bi- or tri-cultural intellectuals – Lucian (Greek and Syrian), Apuleius (Greek, Roman, Punic), Iamblichus (Greek, Syrian, Babylonian), and Heliodorus (Greek, Phoenician, Syrian) – that have often been seen as possible conduits for the importation of ‘foreign’ cultural elements into Greek and Roman literature.⁶⁶ It is important to remember, however, that these intellectuals are only the tip of the iceberg; in a world where so many people, voluntarily or not, found themselves travelling far distances (merchants, soldiers, performers, athletes, slaves, etc.) and settling in new surroundings, skilful transmitters of popular legends and lore from one culture to another could presumably be found throughout the Mediterranean.⁶⁷

Oral tales from the East?

If the prevalence of Near Eastern, Scythian and Egyptian storytellers in Greek and Roman narrative suggests the possibility of a healthy exchange of legends and *novelle* between East and West, are there any specific ‘Eastern’

⁶⁵ Sydow 1948: II–59.

⁶⁶ Cf. Stephens and Winkler 1995: 14–17; Ramelli 2001 on Iamblichus and other Greco-Syrians like Bardaisan, Tatian (who wrote in Latin, Greek and Syriac), Sextus Julius Africanus, who was Palestinian and educated in both Greek and Syro-Aramaic, and Porphyry of Tyre, whose family was of Syriac origin, but studied Greek at Athens under Longinus. On Heliodorus’ possible incorporation of Egyptian narrative, see Rutherford 1997, 2000a, 2002.

⁶⁷ Much of what M. L. West 1997: 606–30 discusses concerning the ‘dynamics of international transmission’ between archaic Greece and Western Asia applies to later periods. For cultural contacts between Greece and Mesopotamia in the Hellenistic and Imperial periods, see Dalley and Reyes 1998.

elements in written 'Western' narrative tradition that might give us some insight into the content of the cross-culturally transmitted tales? In a few rare cases, we can tentatively identify an originally Near Eastern or Egyptian oral tale that eventually, whether by oral or written means, made its way into Greek popular fiction. Perhaps the best example is the story of Aḥiqar, which first appears in a late fifth-century BCE papyrus fragment written in Aramaic, but must be significantly older. In it, Aḥiqar, an advisor to the Assyrian king Sennacherib, is falsely accused by his adopted son of treason, but is saved from death by the executioner, who is beholden to Aḥiqar for an earlier favour. When Sennacherib misses Aḥiqar and rues having killed him, the executioner reveals that he is still alive; Aḥiqar goes on to save the kingdom, while his adopted son is given a stern lecture and imprisoned.⁶⁸ The tale has gone through countless retellings, migrating to different figures and situations, and has been recorded in a variety of contexts, oral and written, up until at least the nineteenth century. In antiquity, the original Near Eastern story has been inserted, with very little modification, into the Greek *Life of Aesop*; the basic outlines of the tale also appears in the Jewish Tobit, the story of Croesus and Cambyes in Book 3 of Herodotus' *Histories*, and (possibly) the Greco-Egyptian fragmentary novel known as *Tinouphis*.⁶⁹

While the ease with which *Aḥiqar* was transferred to different cultures is evident, we might note that the basic situation, in which a wise courtier is saved from an unjust execution, is dependent upon, and always remains within (even in the modern oral versions) a 'court' setting, in which the 'hero' has to negotiate the fickle decisions of an autocratic ruler.⁷⁰ Another Near Eastern tale-type, Potiphar's Wife, that appears in Homer, Euripides and the Greek novels, is also a court-narrative, which features the hero at the mercy of a royal couple. If we may judge from the numerous examples of similar court-narratives preserved in Herodotus, the genre must have originated in the dynastic kingdoms of the Near East and Egypt, and likely continued to flourish as the Persian Empire gave way to Alexander, the Hellenistic kingdoms and the Roman Empire. Narratives such as that found in *Secundus the Silent Philosopher*, in which the hero outwits the Emperor Hadrian, might very well derive from Near Eastern

⁶⁸ The papyrus breaks off before the king's remorse; later versions contain the whole story recounted here.

⁶⁹ Kussl 1992; S. West 2003b. Once again, the variance and popularity of the story suggests a continued re-entry into popular narrative at different periods.

⁷⁰ Thus even the *Life of Aesop* depicts Aesop as, rather curiously, the advisor of the (otherwise unknown) Babylonian king Lycorus in order to set up the *Aḥiqar* narrative.

oral traditions about clever courtiers that had been told for centuries. It is perhaps no accident that many of the Greek novels engineer scenarios in which their protagonists find themselves powerless in Egypt, Ethiopia, or the Near East at the courts of kings or satraps.

Another possible instance of Eastern oral influence on the novel is the opening episode of the *Alexander Romance*, in which Nectanebo, the last Egyptian Pharaoh, seduces the Macedonian queen Olympias and becomes Alexander's father. This almost certainly derives from an Egyptian legend and, while several scholars have posited a written version, there is nothing to rule out the possibility of an orally circulating story.⁷¹ According to Martin Braun, the two belong to a larger group of 'national' heroes around whom legendary traditions developed in the Hellenistic period, usually in response to foreign domination: e.g., Ninus and Semiramis (Syria/Mesopotamia), Sesostris/Sesonchosis (Egypt), Nectanebo (Egypt), Alexander (Greece and Egypt) and Moses (Jews).⁷² For each of these figures we possess a variety of (often contradictory) anecdotes and narratives – e.g., the very different accounts of Semiramis and Ninus preserved in Ctesias, Diodorus, Plutarch and the fragments of the *Ninus Romance* – and it is probably safe to assume that the popularity and importance of these historical figures spawned a host of oral as well as written legends. We could see a process similar to that outlined above for the *Life of Aesop* in which various oral migratory tales and motifs become attached to certain heroes, forming the basis for variant written narratives.⁷³

We can thus tentatively propose two types of anecdotes or stories that have a high probability of originating in Egypt or the Near East *and* of circulating orally: those recounting the deeds of 'national' heroes and tales centred on a figure tied to an imperial court, like Aḥiqar or Potiphar's Wife. The specific instances of these types that have made their way into Greek literature, the tales of Nectanebo and Aḥiqar, retain both strong ties

⁷¹ So Stephens and Winkler 1995: 17 on the possible oral transmission of this tale. Perry 1966 on the other hand sees dependence on a novel, to which he links the fragmentary *Nectanebo's Dream* (in Greek); for the recently discovered Demotic version of this text, see Ryholt 1998a. Much of the first book of the *Alexander Romance* is of Egyptian origin, whether arising from oral tradition, as Merkelbach 1977 thought, or based on a novel, as claimed by Berg 1973. Other parts of the *Alexander Romance* have also been thought to have derived from oral traditions – cf. Merkelbach 1977: 68 on the so-called 'miracle letters'.

⁷² Braun 1938: 1–43. Cf. Plut. *Is. et Os.* 24 (360B): 'However, mighty deeds of Semiramis are celebrated among the Assyrians, and mighty deeds of Sesostris in Egypt, and the Phrygians, even to this day, call brilliant and marvellous exploits "manic" because Manes, one of their very early kings, proved himself a good man and exercised a vast influence among them.' On Sesostris, see Ivantchik 1999, and Dieleman and Moyer 2010.

⁷³ Novelised versions of this material, like *Ninus* or the less literary *Sesonchosis*, presumably represent one strand of this development.

to folklore and their original Eastern setting. With these features in mind, we can look to other kinds of popular tales that might also preserve vestiges of their Eastern roots. Of particular interest are *novelle* in Greek and Roman narrative fiction concerned with supernatural or erotic content. The association of Egypt and the East with magic, divination and spirituality in the Greco-Roman worldview is especially strong (cf. Nectanebo in the *Alexander Romance*), and it is perhaps not a coincidence that Near Eastern and Egyptian characters abound in Greek and Roman supernatural tales. We have already mentioned the frequency of non-Greek characters in the magic tales presented in Lucian's *Lover of Lies*, and although Thessaly is the centre of witchcraft in the *Metamorphoses*, Apuleius still has room for stories featuring a Chaldaean astrologer (2.12) and an Egyptian priest able to raise the dead (2.28). The connection of the East with tales centred on love has been occasionally noted;⁷⁴ Potiphar's Wife tales and adultery stories are well-known examples,⁷⁵ and the romantic Persian stories in Herodotus, Ctesias and Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* can be compared to later tales such as that of the Babylonians Pyramus and Thisbe, and the famous story of the love between Seleucus I's wife Stratonice and his son Antiochus.⁷⁶ Of course, the mere presence of Eastern characters in certain *novelle* does not demonstrate their Eastern origin; magic-tales, for example, might have traditionally featured an Easterner because they were commonly associated with magic, not because the tales themselves were originally from the East. Conversely, as the case of Aḥiqar demonstrates, the basic plot of a court-narrative could be adapted to Western contexts quite easily, and one could imagine a similar migratory process occurring with motifs or episodes in national hero legends, which would become transferred to other figures by the time they show up in Greek or Roman literature.

Let me conclude with a brief comparison of two tales, one found in Lucian's *On the Syrian Goddess*, the other in the *Life of Aesop*. In Lucian's tale, Combabos, a nobleman at the court of Seleucus I, is sent on a mission

⁷⁴ Whitmarsh 2010c: 404–6, with references.

⁷⁵ Konstantakos 2006: 570–1: 'Generally, this type of adultery story seems to have been widespread in the ancient Near East.' While many have thought that they were originally Greek and passed into Arabic literature, 'it is generally impossible to prove the Greek provenance of any particular story' (571, n. 22).

⁷⁶ Mesk 1913; Whitmarsh 2010c: 405–6, on the 'interpenetration of Greek and Semitic erotic narrative' in this tale as well as others. This is not to suggest that the Greek novel, focused on the symmetrical love of a boy and a girl, originated in the East; despite the erotic focus of the tales listed above, there is nothing really comparable to the central plots of the Greek romance. Cf. Ruiz Montero 1996: 74–5.

with the queen, Stratonice.⁷⁷ Fearing that she will attempt to seduce him, he prudently castrates himself before setting out and deposits his 'treasure' with the (unknowing) king for safekeeping. When the inevitable accusation of sexual misconduct arises upon his return, Combabos asks for the valuables he had stored with the king to be revealed, thereby providing definitive proof of his innocence; his accusers are summarily punished. In the *Life of Aesop* (3–4), the mute Aesop is framed by two fellow-slaves as a thief; they eat all of the master's figs, but claim that Aesop, who cannot defend himself verbally, has consumed them. Aesop, however, provides definitive proof of his innocence by inducing himself to vomit, and then pointing to the fact that no traces of figs appear. The other slaves are forced to do the same, and the undigested figs that turn up reveal their guilt.⁷⁸

The tales highlight somewhat different types of wisdom – the foresight of a world-wise courtier vs. the improvisatory brilliance of a lowly slave – but their shared plot, in which the heroes, who are subject to a 'master', go to extraordinary and ingenious lengths to preserve themselves and get the better of their accusers, embodies a certain folkloric logic (reminiscent of the *Ahiqar* story) that hints at oral, popular origins.⁷⁹ Determining whether those origins can ultimately be traced to the Near East, Greece, Egypt, or India seems less important, however, than emphasising the ease with which the tale has been smoothly assimilated to two very different literary and cultural contexts, told both as an episode in the humorous Greek biography of a Phrygian slave and as a historical account of the Seleucid court embedded in an ethnographic account of Nineveh written in Greek by a self-styled 'native' Syrian. Whatever its roots, the story itself respects no national or ethnic boundaries.

Given the state of our evidence, it is extremely difficult to prove that a given plot, motif, or anecdote was transmitted from East to West via oral means, but what can be shown is that the oral circulation of stories was prevalent in all periods of antiquity, among the elite as well as the masses; that many of the same traditional, 'oral' tales are found in both Near Eastern and Greco-Roman literature; and that literary texts depict a lively traffic in oral storytelling between figures from different cultures. There is no doubt that Greek and Roman narrative owes a great debt to the

⁷⁷ Luc. *De Dea Syr.* 19–27; see discussion in Lightfoot 2003: 384–417.

⁷⁸ On this episode, see also Avlami, this volume.

⁷⁹ For later versions of the tale of Combabos, see Lightfoot 2003: 385–8. As she observes, scholars have long noted similarities with *Ahiqar* and other Persian court-narratives featuring a cunning vizier of a fickle monarch. The *Aesop* story corresponds to a tale that opens the Spanish picaresque novel *Lazarillo de Tormes*: Holzberg 1993: 1–2.

storytelling traditions of Egypt and the Near East, and there is considerable evidence that borrowing did not end with Homer and Herodotus. But what seems more relevant and interesting for the study of ancient narrative is the existence, in the Hellenistic and Imperial periods of a thriving, mutual cross-cultural interchange of folktales, *novelle* and legends in a variety of oral and written forms throughout the Eastern Mediterranean.

History, empire and the novel
Pierre-Daniel Huet and the origins of the romance

Phiroze Vasunia

When does “a history of romance” become possible?¹ Referring especially to the European romance tradition, Fredric Jameson evaluates Northrop Frye’s “notion of generic history” in *Anatomy of Criticism* and refers to Frye’s conception of the “romance” as “a wish-fulfillment or Utopian fantasy which aims at the transfiguration of the world of everyday life.”² Jameson reads Frye’s account of romance as a “valorization” of the genre, and he considers why Frye’s particular valorization might have enjoyed so wide a readership in the era of late capitalism.³ The *valorization* of the romance finds a parallel in the *undervaluing* of the so-called realist novel, which was highly praised by Marxist literary critics such as Georg Lukács and of which the works of Honoré de Balzac, Theodore Dreiser, and Walter Scott stand as exemplars. Since, in the age of capitalism, the “perfected narrative apparatus” of the realist novel (which is characterized by “authorial depersonalization, unity of point of view, and restriction to scenic representation”) takes on “the appearance of an asphyxiating, self-imposed penance,” the romance is perceived as offering the oxygen of “narrative heterogeneity and of freedom from that reality principle to which a now oppressive realistic representation is the hostage.”⁴ Frye’s treatment of romance recovers voices, tropes, and cultures from the distant past and holds out the promise of a Utopian future in which storytelling exceeds the restraints imposed by the cultural logic of capitalism.

While it would be worth pursuing further Jameson’s engagement with critics such as Frye or Vladimir Propp or novelists such as Balzac, George Gissing, and Joseph Conrad, and while it would also be well worth investigating, in the spirit of his analysis, how the renaissance in ancient novel studies of the last generation is connected to late capitalism, I would like to reflect on the emergence of an older but related literary history, namely,

¹ Jameson 1983: 131.

² Jameson 1983: 129–30, 110.

³ Jameson 1983: 104.

⁴ Jameson 1983: 104.

the treatise in letter form on the origins of the “romance” by Pierre-Daniel Huet, an author who is often described as the first modern theorist of the ancient novel. (Huet’s use of the term *Roman* overlaps partially but not completely with the word “romance” in Frye’s and Jameson’s work as well as with expressions such as “novel” and “ancient novel,” and I use it in the awareness that the term is something of a floating signifier.) To be sure, there are similarities between Frye’s work, as it appears in Jameson’s reading, and Huet’s text, in the terms that I hope to bring to bear on the discussion. We could with some justification refer to Huet’s treatise as a wish-fulfillment fantasy, given its efforts at rescuing the romance from its critics in contemporary France and at extolling the many virtues of the French examples of the genre. We could remark that, like the romance paradigm, and indeed like certain Marxist visions of history, this account, too, has its own happy ending, in so far as its *telos* is located unmistakably in Western Europe if not in France, and in so far as the treatise itself is attached to Madame de Lafayette’s *Zayde*, which Huet celebrates as an accomplished story on the model of the old romance. We could also say that Huet’s treatise, like Frye’s *Anatomy of Criticism*, is a romance about romance, with its own narrative arc and teleology, its formal pressures and complexities, and its particular mystifications and repressions, the last of which emerge in clear relief when the text is read historically.

But let us turn more directly to Huet and to the contexts surrounding the publication of his analysis in France; by focussing on the rise of a genre, his account indirectly raises questions about its own arrival and the socio-political conditions that lay behind the writing of it. Among the contributing factors leading to the appearance of the treatise, in 1670, are the rise of print culture, the evolving Republic of Letters, the popularity of the romance in Europe, and the vogue for prose fictions based on the models of Heliodorus and Achilles Tatius. Significantly, neither Vincentius Obsopoeus nor Jacques Amyot employed the kind of genealogy or literary geography that Huet would come to propose in the following century. Vincentius had edited the Greek text of Heliodorus and, in 1534, was responsible for the first printed book of an ancient novelist. (The manuscript had been rescued from King Matthias’ Bibliotheca Corviniana after the Ottoman attack on Budapest, an event evoked by Vincentius in his preface.⁵) Vincentius and Jacques Amyot, with his translation of Heliodorus into French (1547 or 1548), helped launch a period of some 250 years in which “hundreds if not thousands of novels in western Europe were

⁵ Vincentius Obsopoeus 1534.

based directly and indirectly on translations of ancient Greek novels.”⁶ But neither they nor contemporary writers such as Jean Chapelain sketched out the wide-ranging literary history that Huet offers in his work.

Even by the standards of the multicultural present, Huet’s treatise is astonishingly open to the idea that influences from the East contributed to the origins of the romance, and later attempts at tracing the origins of the novel seem overly nationalist or parochial in comparison to Huet’s capacious vision. What is striking about Huet’s approach, as Srinivas Aravamudan observes, “is his wide and lateral geography of the genre, imposing a solution for the origin of *Romance* that could very well be characterized as anatopian (or as a spatial displacement) but that is nonetheless refreshing compared to the more frequent resorts to anachronism made by the backward projections and false expectations of novel criticism.”⁷ Huet’s willingness to find practitioners of the romance is matched by a cast of mind that is prepared to accept “fictions, fables, and romances” in the distant corners of the globe and to suppose that “the most barbarous of nations are taken with romantic inventions as well as the most refined.”⁸ For all the problems that modern readers have with his cultural stereotypes, Huet paints with a humane brush that shows an “inclination to fables” as “common to all men,” “natural to them,” seated “in the very frame and disposition of their soul,” and connected with their “desire for knowledge” and “understanding.”⁹ Moreover, the authors he places in the ranks of ancients who observed the rules of romance – which for him are related to the rules of epic – are Antonius Diogenes, Lucian, Athenagoras, Iamblichus, Heliodorus, Achilles Tatius, Eustathius, and Theodorus Pro-dromus, with others such as John the Damascene and Longus lower down the scale. Huet’s canon of accomplished ancient novelists is far deeper than the group of two Latin and five Greek authors that is typically mentioned in modern contexts, and his full list includes many sources from a variety of ethnic and linguistic milieux.

Huet, of course, traces the origins of the “romance” to “Eastern Nations,” a group that initially includes Egypt, Arabia, Persia, and Syria, but later is implied to cover India as well.¹⁰ One reason to ascribe an Eastern origin to romance is that the authors of the ancient romances come from places such as Syria, Phoenicia, Alexandria, and Cyprus, which itself “deserves to be styled the country of the romancers rather than Greece, where they

⁶ Sandy 2008: 301. ⁷ Aravamudan 2005: 52.

⁸ Huet 1715: 123. Translations of Huet’s treatise are based on the version made by Stephen Lewis, in 1715. In many places, I have modified Lewis’ translations.

⁹ Huet 1715: 124. ¹⁰ Huet 1715: 13.

were only transplanted; though they liked the soil so well, and found it so agreeable, that they immediately took root."¹¹ Another reason is that the inhabitants of these nations are "addicted to poetry, invention, and fiction," "their discourse is figures," they always "express themselves in allegories," and "their theology and philosophy, but principally their politics and morals, are all disguised under fables and parables."¹² Thus, the Egyptians were inclined to the mysterious, to communication through images, and their religion was cloaked in fables;¹³ the Arabians deployed unnatural metaphors, similitudes, and fictions in books such as the Koran, which Muhammad overtly composed in that manner;¹⁴ and the Persians delighted in their fictions no less than the Arabians, as the fabulous adventures of Zoroaster proved, while their poets came to have no equal in license and falsification.¹⁵

In this farrago of "Oriental" proclivities, Huet's chronology makes little sense, as scholars have pointed out, but the moment of transfer with the Greek-speaking world happens in Asia Minor, for it is the Ionians (and first among them, the Milesians) who learn the art of making romance from the Persians.¹⁶ The Milesians, perhaps because they surpassed all the Ionians "in the discernment of their pleasures and their taste for delicacy," developed the form so successfully "that the Milesian tales, that is, their romances, full of love adventures and licentious relations, advanced into the highest reputation."¹⁷ As for the Greeks, they "happily improved" the art that they acquired both from the Milesians, during the period of Achaemenid rule, and from the Persians, after the conquest by Alexander.¹⁸ "They have reformed it from the rude dress it appeared in among the Orientals," Huet writes; "they have reduced it into a more regular shape, adjusting it to the rules of epic, and joining those different parts into one complete body which made up the romances of former times without order or disposition."¹⁹ Huet then proceeds to list those writers who, in his view, best followed the rules of romance, and he in effect ranks the ancient Greek novelists, most of whom could be said to have improved on their Oriental forebears.

For all its obfuscation, Huet's treatise on the romance aroused interest from several quarters virtually from the moment that it appeared as the

¹¹ Huet 1715: 15. ¹² Huet 1715: 15–16. ¹³ Huet 1715: 16.

¹⁴ Huet 1715: 18–20. ¹⁵ Huet 1715: 21–6.

¹⁶ Huet 1715: 37; Lewis' translation reverses the direction of influence that Huet suggests here. Gégou 1971: 70 renders the French as "Ce furent eux qui, les premiers, apprirent des Perses l'art de faire les romans . . .".

¹⁷ Huet 1715: 37. ¹⁸ Huet 1715: 83. ¹⁹ Huet 1715: 83–4.

preface to Lafayette's *Zayde* in 1670. As Daniel L. Selden notes, one aim of Huet's work was "to ennoble the genre with an impeccable pedigree of Greco-Roman precedents and to diffuse its potentially disruptive force by subsuming it within the canons of orthodox neoclassical aesthetics," and the treatise certainly attracted students of French prose fiction from an early date.²⁰ Huet himself felt the need, in his autobiography, not merely to defend the treatise on literary grounds but to refute the charge that he had "introduced a source of corruption into the lives and manners of youth, and afforded fuel, as it were, to their intemperate passions."²¹ Huet's reminiscences imply that the attribution of the romance to Eastern sources raised fewer hackles among contemporary readers than the defence of romances which might drive the young to acts of love. Recent critics, more interested in the former than the latter, have pointed to the emphasis placed by Huet on the ancient novel's Eastern origins and suggested that, for Huet, the novel arose out of fertile contact zones between Greece and the Near East. Huet's treatise can thus be set in opposition to the later work of Erwin Rohde (*Der griechischer Roman und seine Vorläufer*, 1876), which argued for a Greek genesis of the ancient novel, or, alternately, in a line of continuity with the studies of Martin Braun and John Barns, which refer to connections between Greek prose fiction and the world of the eastern Mediterranean and beyond. To that latter category, one might also add the contributions of the many scholars represented in this volume who have situated ancient prose fiction in Eastern contexts and sensitively described the genre's location in cross-cultural environments.

As Selden observes, "... Huet sets out to trace an unbroken genealogy of prose fiction. Not surprisingly, his itinerary reconfirms *translatio studii* and the Westering of culture: from the Orient, we move through Greece and Rome to medieval France and thence to modern Europe."²² But what made Huet connect East and West, and why did he seek to bring Oriental elements into his narrative at all? The French romances of Lafayette as well as Madeleine de Scudéry and Marie-Catherine Desjardins ("Madame de Villedieuand") were modelled, at least in part, on ancient prose fictions by Heliodorus and Achilles Tatius, who were, along with Longus, the Greek novelists most frequently read between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries.²³ Huet's treatise served to explain the Eastern settings of prose fictions that remained the models for French romance into his own day. The romance to which Huet's treatise was attached, Lafayette's *Zayde*, also offers

²⁰ Selden 1994: 44.

²¹ Huet 1810: 2.52.

²² Selden 1994: 44.

²³ Plazenet 1997 and 2002.

a partial explanation in so far as it was a “Hispano-Moorish” romance that lent itself to a consideration of Arabic and North African literary influence. Lafayette may have written her work as a fictional riposte to those who were undermining the genre and who were rebuking it on the grounds that it pandered to low emotions in women, but she nonetheless retained the exotic flavour of the locales and she swept across the Mediterranean in her story-telling, even as she slowed down the action and kept the number of characters relatively small.²⁴ To quote the blurb of the most recent English-language translation, “*Zayde* unfolds during the long medieval struggle between Christians and Muslims for control of the Iberian Peninsula; Madame de Lafayette (1634–93) takes the reader on a Mediterranean tour typical of classical and seventeenth-century romances – from Catalonia to Cyprus and back again – with battles, prophecies, and shipwrecks dotting the crisscrossed paths of the book’s noble lovers.”²⁵ In theme and subject, *Zayde* was thus a suitable text for Huet to introduce through a treatise on the Oriental and Greco-Roman precursors to the French romance. However, if the Muslim Spanish background offered Huet a point of departure for his far-reaching study, it could serve only as a partial justification, since he sought to connect the romance not just to Arabic sources but also to Persian, Indian, and other Eastern traditions.

Another explanation may be found in the precedent set by Huet’s older contemporary and friend Claude de Saumaise, who used the Latin *nom de plume* Salmasius in his publications, and who in a prefatory address “to the reader” in his edition of Achilles Tatius had already, in 1640, made the connection between Persia, the Milesian tale, and prose fiction. (In 1647, Jean Chapelain, another friend and a literary adviser to Louis XIV’s minister Jean-Baptiste Colbert, had written a dialogue on the romance, but he made little or no mention of Eastern sources and did not take his study beyond the Middle Ages.²⁶) Salmasius anticipated Huet, as Margaret Doody suggests, and was almost as wide-ranging as him in his own brief remarks on the origin of the genre:

The Persians first affected up this kind of amorous literature, whether in prose or verse, or rhythmic speech, in which they excelled. And they can be seen in every period to delight in fables written in this mode. You will not find it hard to believe that of old they introduced the beginning of Milesian tales in Asia, which they ruled. Certainly, they gave to the Arabs the fashion of this same kind of writing and the genius for it. The Arabs

²⁴ See Wilson 2007, with DeJean 1991. ²⁵ Paige 2006.

²⁶ Chapelain’s text is reprinted in Gégou 1971.

then transmitted it to the Spanish; from them, we Gauls, in turn, took it; and from them, indeed, it also went elsewhere.²⁷

The observations of Salmasius, who was among the first to propose a *translatio* for the European novel, is reminiscent of Huet, who also held that the Persians influenced Milesian tales and the Greek story-telling traditions. Salmasius may have been alluding to Cervantes, who made the connection with Arabic literature in his celebrated novel. Huet refers to both Salmasius and Cervantes in his treatise, but insists that France transmitted the art of the romance to Spain, rather than Spain to France.²⁸ Huet is generally keen to maintain French primacy in transmission, though he sometimes becomes obscure on the topic, and he is even more zealous in pointing to the French superiority in romance. To him, even the worst of the French romances surpass the best of other European nations, and the reason for this is the gallantry of the French man in relation to the French woman.²⁹ For, since the French woman, being more accustomed than in other countries to go about on her own, has turned her heart into a fortress, men are required “to make a regular and formal assault against this fort, to employ so much industry and address to reduce it, that they have formed it into an art scarcely known to other nations.”³⁰ Huet’s *translatio* is anticipated by Salmasius; it begins in the Orient and attains an artistic highpoint in France.

For a further explanation, however, I suggest that we seek to understand the growing connections that were developing between Europe, the eastern Mediterranean, and Asia. In fact, these connections are reflected in the books that Huet must have read when he wrote the treatise, in 1666, in the convent at Malnoue as well as in his own later writings on trade, commerce, and navigation. Huet was prodigiously learned, and he consulted a number of contemporary studies by travellers and scholars as well as the Greek and Latin authors, contemporary experts on Greco-Roman antiquity, and erudite works about Britain, the Americas, and France. The letters from Father Bouchet, in Madras, to Huet show a remarkable interest in the history of Indian history and religion, for all the amusement they were later to give Voltaire.³¹ According to Fabienne Gégou, the modern editor of the treatise, the sources that Huet would have used on the “Oriental

²⁷ Ἑρωτικῶν Ἀχιλλέως Ταστίου, *sive de Clitophontis & Leucippes amoribus libri VIII, ex bibliotheca Cl. Salmasii* (Leiden, 1640), “Ad Lectorem”; quoted in Doody 1996: 260 (translation modified).

²⁸ Huet 1715: 121. ²⁹ Huet 1715: 138. ³⁰ Huet 1715: 140.

³¹ Schwab 1984: 146. The letters are printed in the eighteenth-century collection *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses écrites des missions étrangères*. A selection of the letters on India are conveniently brought together in Vissière 2000; for a letter from Bouchet to Huet on metempsychosis or the transmigration of souls, see Vissière 2000: 170–92.

question” were Bernier, Buxtorf, Chardin, Antoine Galland, Gaulmin, Herrera, Hottinger, Ricaut, Schikard, Tavernier and Marmol.³² It would require far too much space to weigh the contributions of each to European knowledge about the Orient or to document the manner in which they obtained their information, but let us restrict our attention to three or four of these names. Take François Bernier, for example, whose work remains an important source on the Mughal Empire in seventeenth-century South Asia.³³ His many writings, which were based on his travels to India between 1658 and 1667, include letters to dignitaries in France such as Colbert and Chapelain. A doctor and a critic of Aristotle, Bernier learned Persian well enough to translate Pierre Gassendi and René Descartes into that language.³⁴ Or consider Jean-Baptiste Tavernier, who made six voyages to India and South-east Asia between 1641 and 1667 and whose travels to India partly overlapped with Bernier’s.³⁵ Huet in his memoirs says that he had read Tavernier’s dispatches “with attention and singular pleasure” and was, therefore, disappointed to encounter a man who was “rough, unpolite, tinged with foreign manners, and one whom you might readily suspect to have used another pen than his own in his narrations,” though Huet conceded that he still “learned various things from his discourse” which he would not have gained otherwise.³⁶ Or take Jean Chardin, a jeweller, who set off for Persia and India in 1665 and whose travels occurred largely after the appearance of Huet’s treatise but who sent reports back to France before eventual publication.³⁷ The presence in the Orient of Bernier, Tavernier, and Chardin was related to the growing French and European interest in overseas trade and colonial expansion. That is true, too, about others in Gégou’s list such as Antoine Galland, the French translator of the *Kitāb al-f layla wa-layla* (“Book of the thousand and one nights”) and the man who introduced the “Arabian Nights” to the European reading public. Galland, who made several journeys to the Near East, on one of which he worked for the French East India Company, also helped Barthélemy d’Herbelot with the encyclopaedic *Bibliothèque orientale* and collected antiquities for Colbert and Louis XV.³⁸ Herbelot was responsible for reprinting, in 1696, a French translation of Sir Thomas Roe’s *Voyage to East-India* (1665), and “the Bibliothèque Nationale possesses one of these printings, annotated in the hand of Huet.”³⁹

In short, the Oriental matter in Huet’s treatise about the romance was made possible because of French and wider European activities in the Near

³² Gégou 1971: 41. ³³ See Bernier 1996, with Burke 1999. ³⁴ Ballaster 2005: 143.

³⁵ See Tavernier 1995. ³⁶ Huet 1810: 2.47. ³⁷ Emerson 1991.

³⁸ Dew 2009: 35–6, 198–9. ³⁹ Schwab 1984: 191.

East and the further Orient, and Huet's work would have looked very different without the writings of the traders, jewellers, doctors, and other agents who participated in official state missions and unofficial enterprises outside Europe. France already had colonies in North America, the Caribbean, West Africa, and India in the seventeenth century, and the French East India Company, which was established, in 1664, at about the time that Huet was composing his work on the romance, was fiercely competitive with the other European trading companies. Jonathan I. Israel reminds us that:

Louis XIV, whose personal rule began in 1661, was eager to advance French overseas commerce and colonization and, especially in the first decade of his personal rule, was willing to devote substantial resources both to extending and strengthening France's colonial empire and to building up the French navy. His minister in charge of finance and economic affairs, Jean-Baptiste Colbert, was tireless in his efforts to promote French industry and overseas commerce, and placed particular stress on developing the French colonies and stimulating France's long-distance trade with all continents.⁴⁰

Between 1663 and 1670, Colbert was behind the creation of colonial trading companies such as the *Compagnie des Indes Orientales*, *Compagnie des Indes Occidentales*, the *Compagnie de la France équinoxiale*, and the *Compagnie du Levant*, and the founding of these was followed by the establishment of at least four other colonial companies at the behest of Louis XIV himself. The French throne was becoming increasingly aggressive in relation to the colonial powers of the Dutch, the Spanish, and the English, and, as Israel adds, "French colonial policy was now altogether more thrusting and vigorous than it had been before 1661."⁴¹ While there has been much discussion about the theory and practice of empire and colonialism in the seventeenth century, and while there continues to be debate about differences between empire in that period and the decades to come, we can say that France under Louis XIV followed a determined course of expansion in order that it might gain wealth and land overseas and come to assume a strategic advantage over its European rivals.

Readers who are familiar with this history will scarcely be surprised to learn that Huet was also the author of a history of commerce and navigation among the ancients and a study of the colonial Dutch trading companies. The history of commerce and navigation among the ancients (*Histoire du commerce et de la navigation des anciens*) was written in response to a request from Colbert, and translated into other European languages, and it came to

⁴⁰ Israel 1998: 430. ⁴¹ Israel 1998: 430.

occupy an important place in the historiography of Alexander the Great.⁴² For Huet, the conquests of Alexander changed the face of the world and wrought a great revolution in commercial affairs, with the capture of Tyre and the foundation of Alexandria being turning points in the opening of a new era in commerce.⁴³ In the preface to Colbert, Huet writes that the book marked a departure from his previous studies and that only Colbert could have persuaded him to attempt the work on the grounds that few previous guides to the subject were available. The ripples were felt across the Channel, as we can discern from the English translation, which is dedicated to the Directors of the East India Company. “I could not think a treatise of this kind could properly be published under any other patronage but yours,” writes the translator, “who are, as far as can be gathered from the best accounts, the most glorious and important society for trade that ever flourish’d in any nation. You are certainly the best judges of the subject the author has treated of . . .”⁴⁴

This concern with the opening up of the world through trade and commerce was also explored in the study on trade, *Le grand trésor historique et politique du florissant commerce des Hollandois, dans tous les états et empires du monde*, which was first published in 1712, and also soon translated into other European languages. Huet’s book is mainly concerned to narrate the rise of Dutch trade, but it insists on the significance of free trade and the link between trade and political power. According to Huet, England and Holland are the most powerful countries in Europe because they pay attention to commerce, whereas a country such as France ranks lower than them because it has failed to understand the benefits of trade or the true relationship between trade and politics. As he says, “a great state cannot flourish, or indeed be at peace, if it has not a great trade; for it is only by means of trade that it can draw to itself riches and plenty, without which it can undertake nothing advantageous, either to aid and assist its allies, or extend its limits.”⁴⁵ That remark about the extension of the state’s limits is noteworthy since one of the striking features of the history that Huet presents is the extent to which he discusses Dutch trading activities beyond Europe. He devotes the second half of the book to the Dutch trade in both the East and West Indies, and even appends to his work a lengthy “report made to the States-General, by Daniel Braems (Book-keeper General in Batavia, who commanded the rich India Fleet that arrived in Holland in the year 1698) concerning the true state of the

⁴² Briant 2009: 173.

⁴³ See Huet 1716: 91–2 in Huet 1717: 57.

⁴⁴ Huet 1717: iii–iv.

⁴⁵ Huet 1719: iii (translation modified).

affairs of the East-India Company.”⁴⁶ Huet’s consideration of international commerce not only describes the establishment, in Asia and the Caribbean, of European missions and outposts but also depicts the beginnings of that age of European empire which was not to end until the middle years of the twentieth century. The competition between European powers was coming to be over land and peoples, no less than over trade, and the places mentioned by Huet in his study – Timor, Siam, China, Sumatra, Coromandel, Ceylon, Malabar, Surat, and Persia, among others – already had become part of the struggle between the European powers in their aspirations for conquest.

If there is no need to rehearse, once again, the course of “conquest, commerce, and conversion”⁴⁷ that was followed by the Dutch, English, Portuguese, Spanish, and French in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and that was underway by the time Huet wrote his work, we might nonetheless wish to turn our attention to the forms of intercultural contact that Huet implicitly evokes in these late texts and even in his life’s work. In *Le grand trésor*, Huet applied his enormous erudition to the nature of commerce, to an analysis of how trade might develop the “strength and grandeur” of a nation,⁴⁸ and to show that French greatness in Europe was linked to the successful pursuit of trade on a global scale. If small nations such as England and Holland could become European powers through their interests in trade, then France, too, could rise to political supremacy, were it only to give sufficient encouragement to commerce. This was accompanied by the study of commerce and navigation among the ancients, which served to render a historical depth to *Le grand trésor* and establish an antique pedigree for the examination of trade in the author’s time. “It is at this time,” as Pierre Briant has written, “that Arrian’s *Indica* was rediscovered, considered by its first commentators as a vade mecum for navigators and explorers coming from Europe. It is on Arrian that Montesquieu essentially founded the revised edition of the *Esprit des Lois*.”⁴⁹ But ancient history did not offer an immediate model that simply could be taken over without qualification. Huet was arguing that, far more than was the case in antiquity, “success in commerce and success in war” were linked to each other and that France could succeed in Europe only by appreciating that “the nature of empire had changed for moderns because of the direct relationship” between commerce and war.⁵⁰ The more a nation traded, the greater would be its power, and if a nation were to attempt to

⁴⁶ Huet 1719.

⁴⁷ *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 11th edn (1910–1911), 14.405, on the objects of Portuguese expansion.

⁴⁸ Huet 1719: v. ⁴⁹ Briant 2009: 174. ⁵⁰ Whatmore 2009: 57.

constrain trade for any reason, then trade would find its way to another home “where it may have greater safety, and be more favourably used.”⁵¹

Huet’s writings show that European “encounters with Asian knowledge-cultures” unfolded in contexts of mercantile capitalism and proto-colonialism, though in historical situations different from those that were to follow in the age of the Enlightenment.⁵² Some scholars suggest that we “lack a model for thinking about the Orientalism of the pre-Enlightenment period” and that the conditions of European empire were beginning to change by the end of Huet’s life in the early eighteenth century, or a little later.⁵³ European nations did not enjoy political dominance in Asia in Huet’s day, nor were they politically superior to the Ottoman Empire in the eastern Mediterranean. Nevertheless, Huet appreciates how the interlocking spheres of information, travel, trade, power, and colonialism relate to each other, and he calls for an increase in France’s involvement with the outside world. Huet’s country was not yet awash with Asian commodities, even if he adopted the practice of drinking tea, but his books were prophetic declarations of the kind of nation that France would fiercely strive to become.⁵⁴

The treatise in letter form on the origins of the romance becomes a possibility when the author dares to turn outward, and not just inward, in his attempt to understand the history of the form. The modern reader who locates the text within specific currents of the contemporary political economy apprehends some of the circumstances that lie behind its creation, while the author reveals to his readers his interest in the extrinsic and the extraliterary features of prose fiction. It would be overly facile to argue that Huet’s reading of the romance emerges in the seventeenth century because his own historical situation resembles, or is in the process of resembling, the situation of the Roman Empire, when the texts of ancient prose fiction were crafted, nor do I make that argument here. However, Huet does imagine his work into being at a moment when a particular history of overseas European rivalries is taking shape and when the “worlding” of the Orient entails that, for men of learning, Asia can begin to break free from its biblical and classical attachments. Even though Huet is writing at a time when the French adventure romance has not yet exhausted itself as a genre, he grasps the phenomenon of the form as a whole and recognizes why tales about star-crossed lovers, pirates, shipwrecks, travellers, and ancient empires speak to readerships in seventeenth-century France. For him, the

⁵¹ Huet 1719: 17. ⁵² Dew 2009: 5. ⁵³ Dew 2009: 7.

⁵⁴ For the interest in tea, see Huet 1810: 2.81.

plot “falls into history, so to speak, and enters the force fields” of European society.⁵⁵

None of this is to deny that Huet practises what Jameson might call “a ‘positive’ hermeneutic, which tends to filter out historical difference and the radical discontinuity of modes of production and their cultural expressions.”⁵⁶ Yet, rather than see Huet’s version of transmission as anachronistic or incoherent, we might instead think of it as a cosmopolitan and polyphonic essay that seeks to trace lines of filiation between discrete story-telling peoples. Huet invokes Aristotle in his treatise but he also disturbs the Aristotelian unities of time and place and disrupts the Aristotelian search for origins by ascribing the invention to Eastern nations, without clearly identifying which of them was the first. All romance traditions ultimately lead to France, but Huet still devises an incredibly varied narrative, one that is teeming with discursive sources, centrifugal in its willingness to seek romancers outside of Europe, and proleptically challenging to those future critics who would firmly attach novels to particular nations or heritages. To read Huet means to understand that the study of the novel “could (and maybe always should) involve the consideration of narrative and cultural interchange among a variety of people, sources, languages, and epochs; [and] that geography and spatial models of horizontal cross-connections could be just as effective and persuasive as vertical national history or notions of temporal influence and succession.”⁵⁷

With this perspective on the situation of Huet’s literary history, we are, I hope, in a better position to understand one of the paradoxes at the heart of the treatise. On the one hand, Huet traces an argument that archaizes the Oriental story-telling traditions, characterizes them in terms of cultural clichés, and marks them out as coeval with Greco-Roman antiquity. On the other hand, Huet celebrates the proliferation of fictions that have appeared in the world republic of letters at all times and places. Perhaps the Orientalism of Huet’s treatise is best understood as an early instance of estrangement and defamiliarization, two concepts that Montesquieu was to perfect in the *Lettres persanes* (*Persian Letters*), which were published in 1721, the year of Huet’s death.⁵⁸ Where Montesquieu inverts the European gaze and has his travellers proceed from Persia to Europe, or, as he says, “to another universe,” Huet offers defamiliarization by exegesis and exposition. The point of Huet’s exercise is not just to provoke French readers into questioning their manners, customs, and religion, but also to colour and

⁵⁵ Jameson 1983: 130.

⁵⁶ Jameson 1983: 130.

⁵⁷ Aravamudan 2005: 53.

⁵⁸ Anderson 2006: 164–5.

divide their singularity and illustrate the traditions they shared with other peoples. Huet's "axis of otherness"⁵⁹ shows up connections between France and the non-European world, for in his account historians who tell lies and fables can be found among Europeans as well as the Medes, Persians, and Syrians.⁶⁰ The story-teller is not just someone who has come from afar, but also someone who has lived in France for a long time.⁶¹ Huet leaves his French readers happy in the knowledge that the adventure romance is a combination of the Oriental, Greek, Latin, and European. That is a happy ending and, as any number of authors will tell you, happy endings are hard to pull off.⁶²

⁵⁹ I borrow this phrase from Jameson 1990: 49.

⁶⁰ See Huet 1715: 134. ⁶¹ See Benjamin 1968: 84.

⁶² See Jameson 2006: 95. My thanks to Srinivas Aravamudan, Mary Bryden, Miriam Leonard, and Tim Whitmarsh for their help with this chapter.

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